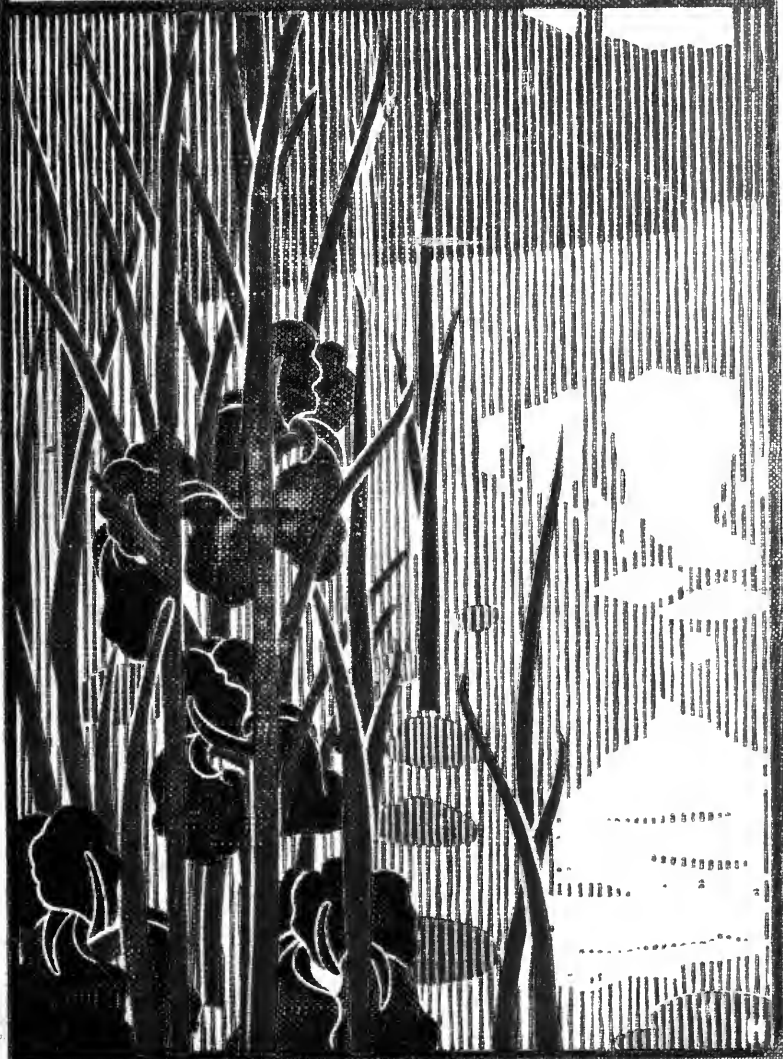


THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS





THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

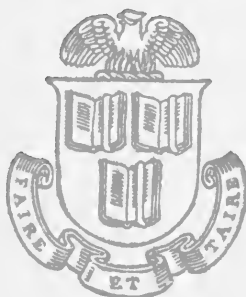
8300

THE LADY OF THE
FLAG-FLOWERS

THE LADY OF THE FLAG - FLOWERS

BY

FLORENCE WILKINSON



HERBERT S. STONE AND COMPANY
CHICAGO AND NEW YORK
MDCCCXCIX

COPYRIGHT 1899, BY
HERBERT S. STONE & CO

PS
3509
E919L

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

ANCESTORS

PART ONE

LITTLE PEOPLE OF THE BUSH

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. The Father of Them All	13
II. A Danse Dramatique	27

PART TWO

DEW-OF-THE-MORNING

I. On the St. Gabriel	39
II. An Open Mind	57
III. The Pique-nique	65
IV. A Fancy	73
V. Yvonne Makes a Promise	77
VI. Blows A Fair Wind	83
VII. "Ah, ah, Cécilia."	99

PART THREE

OPEN WINGS

I. The Winning-out of Willoughby	III
II. Orchardhurst	131
III. First Times	145
IV. Makers of Manners	161
V. Truth and Untruth	173
VI. A Spring Walk	191
VII. An Indian Heaven	203
VIII. When the Birds Fly	211

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART FOUR

WHAT THE WORLD BROUGHT

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. The Old Order Changeth	229
II. A Renewed Acquaintance	235
III. Consummation	257
IV. The Clear Fountain	263
V. An April Miracle	273
VI. Another Renewed Acquaintance	281

PART FIVE

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

I. Before the Tenth	291
II. Jangling Voices	297
III. Willoughby Makes a Promise	303
IV. Yvonne's Great Day	311
V. Helen's Letter	321
VI. The Derelict	327
VII. The Calling	337
VIII. At Chateauheriault	345
IX. After the Tenth	357

EPILOGUE

Heart's-Ease	361
------------------------	-----

PROLOGUE



ANCESTORS

“ . . . enfin, voilà la prédiction d'un sauvage arrivé. Le nommé Louis Atarice, à qui Louis Quatorze donna son nom, étant en France. . . .”

—*Old Manuscript in the Archives
of Canada, Parliament Building,
Quebec.*

PROLOGUE



ANCESTORS

‘You will not go, Aymar?’ plaintively said Corisande, the Countess d’Héry.

As she rested her elbow on the table, holding the cards in her hand, the point-lace fell away sumptuously from her ivory-rounded arm.

The cards, after the German fashion, were curiously engraved around the margin with leaves and bells. The court-cards were roi, chevalier and valet, and bore upon their faces fantastic figures, often in attitudes of grotesque combat. They were clothed, some à la mode Grecq, others after the elaborate fashion of the seventeenth century.

“I must go, Corisande,” said Aymar. “The King wishes it.”

Aymar Fleurnel, the Count d’Héry, looked tenderly at the little face opposite him. His tenderness was neither subjective nor objective. It was always in the possessive case.

PROLOGUE

In the oval of the little face, dark lashes, down-swept, hid the gaze he knew. The baby curves of the mouth drooped with incipient grief. Aymar and Corisande were husband and wife and fond of each other, which was more than a nine days' wonder in the court of the Grand Monarque.

"But Madame wishes you to stay," said Corisande, still with her eyes upon her cards. She would cry if she looked at Aymar. To shed natural tears at the Chateau d'Héry were worse than wicked, it were stupid; and merely because one's husband was going over seas—that were plainly *bourgeoise*. And in mid-afternoon in the chateau garden, at the piquet table! Clearly, Corisande could not cry.

"Therefore the King wishes me to go. It naturally follows."

He laid a *chevalier-de-carreau* upon the table. One noticed the exquisite oblong of his polished nails, their pinkness, and the symmetry of the white crescent at their bases.

"See if you can match my Bayard!" he said.

He wished that Corisande would raise her eyes. He could not see how much she cared when her lids were down. Aymar was a

ANCESTORS

virtuoso in the emotions as he was in cards, in heraldry, in falconry, and in all the other fine arts of the times.

Grief should be esoteric, should be expressed intimately, like the symbolism on the azure shield of d'Héry.

Corisande's black eyes, veiled by tears, satisfied without exceeding. They were like a deep, clear pool in the woods, when a wet, overhanging branch suddenly patters a silvery tremolo upon its ebony surface.

"Then I will go with you. And look, my Alessandro takes your Bayard."

She drew the cards toward her and patted them prettily. Then she raised her eyes to her husband and smiled at him.

The brown water just trembled a little now with the reflection of wavering leaves above it.

"Shall I not go, Kebeco?"

She addressed a tame shrike that sat sullenly on a low branch of the mulberry-tree growing against the garden wall. They had named him Kebeco after that rock in the new world on which had lately been built the Chateau St. Louis.

Kebeco, realizing his chain, refrained from making a strike at the taper finger

PROLOGUE

raised temptingly toward him. But he sank his head down into his neck till the ruffled feathers stood up angrily all around. He looked like a Frenchman who shrugs his shoulders up to his ears, with an indignant "Je ne sais."

"Aha!" laughed Aymar, imitating the shriek, "Kebeco will not answer as to that."

"We will play on it," said Corisande. "Qui perd gagne. What do you say, Aymar?"

The shriek watched them with round, gloating eyes.

"You are delicious. So be it," said the Count.

His artistic sense was tickled by the nonchalance of the idea.

She put down her valet-de-tréfle. So they played at piquet, the lady and the cavalier, and the stake was whether or no she should travel with him over-seas. Her skirt, that was ashes-of-roses, made an ample glistening circle about her on the close-cropped green of the parterre. Lace ruffles fell about his silk-stockinged knees, crossed under the gilt and flower inlaid table. Her face was like a fruit above the points of lace that rayed stiffly out, plate-shaped, below her chin. Her hair was dressed high and

ANCESTORS

smooth, like the coiffure of Gabrielle d'Estrées in the portrait. The lofty puffs above and the expansive collar below enhanced the child-like softness of her contour and expression. Quaintly frivolous they looked, like a picture on an ivory French fan.

So they played at piquet together, Aymar and Corisande. But the stake was posterity.

Two figures enter the garden now, that one does not see in the painted pictures on fans. One of them surely has never before seen a chateau garden nor a cavalier and lady playing at piquet. But for truth's sake they must go into this picture. Also, it is due to posterity.

"Voilà!" said Aymar, seeing the figures between the arch of twin oleanders trained to intertwine. "The Abbé Delfouché and his Savage."

After the new-comers had been greeted, they sat down on the marble seat, built into the wall below the purple-fruited mulberry. Tall urns of flowers flanked it at either end.

"He is one of Père Breboeuf's Hurons," said the abbot. "He has been with us three months. It is his first visit outside convent walls."

PROLOGUE

"You honor us, Monsieur," said Aymar to the Indian, hiding a smile behind his curled mustache.

But the ends of the smile came out, and were not lost upon the astute savage.

To Aymar's surprise, he was answered in dignified, though broken, French.

"You smile, Monsieur," said Louis Atarice. "In our country we do not jest with strangers."

At the sound of the Huron's voice, Kebeco shifted his position, hopping the length of his chain to get a view of the stranger.

The Indian looked up, also the abbot.

"One of those little piés grèches," said the Count. "He was trained by a pupil of Albert de Luynes. We have named him Kebeco."

"Kebeco," repeated Louis Atarice, in liquid syllables that at once transformed the shrike's name into an unknown tongue. "Kebeco!"

The shrike uttered a low, answering note, and the red circles around his eyes gleamed as he glowered at Louis Atarice.

While the shrike and the Indian looked at each other thus, Corisande scrutinized her visitor. The Hurons have been called the

ANCESTORS

nobles of the Indians. His bronze features, little written upon by play of emotion, yet had not the blankness of an unlived life. They were rather a mask, with the severity of mystery its mold. His French garments sat with conscious superfluity upon his classic person. Not Louis Atarice, but his frivolous waistcoat was ill at ease.

"How like you our river?" asked Corisande, putting down a card absently in response to her husband's urgent brows.

"Much. For I have learned how far superior is our Father of Waters," answered Louis Atarice.

"But Paris?" said the abbot, amused at his protégé's lack of urbanity.

"It is not Ithonatiria," said Louis Atarice, blandly.

They all laughed, except the Indian. Even Kebeco jeered a little, shutting one eye. But the other eye was open, fixed apprehensively on the Huron. Did he recognize a kindred savagery in that impassive face?

Corisande and Aymar played on at piquet.

"*Ventre Saint-Grish!* as *le roi Henri* used to say," cried Aymar. "I have won. You have lost your stake, Corisande."

PROLOGUE

"Not so, Aymar," exclaimed the Countess, as she pushed back her chair from the table, and adjusted the emerald fleur-de-lis at her tiny waist. "It is I who capot."

"You forget, *mon amie*," laughed the Count, "who wins, loses. The stake is mine."

"You are going to join the Count de Buade in New France, Monsieur?" inquired the abbot, as they ascended together the terraced steps to the chateau.

"The King has sent me," said Aymar, dramatically dolorous.

Then, veering round to vivacity:

"And behold, my compatriot!"

He spread out his jeweled hands toward the Huron. But Louis Atarice was more to him than compatriot, if he could only know it. He was fellow-ancestor, as well.

Kebeco, left alone on the mulberry-tree made a jab at an iridescent whir that streaked past him. The humming-bird flew on, unmolested, to his lilies. Kebeco fell asleep, with one red-rimmed eye half-open, turned toward the lilies.

PART ONE



THE LITTLE PEOPLE OF THE BUSH

“It was na in the ha', the ha',
Nor in the painted bower,
But it was in the gude green wood
Amang the lilly-flower.”

—*Old Ballad.*

CHAPTER I

THE FATHER OF THEM ALL

The blows of Babou, the Indian wood-cutter, rang against the great pine-tree, and echoed through the quiet wood on the hill-side.

Yvonne, little and brown, sitting on a stump, watched him. All the French-Indian blood in her was stirred by the incipient tragedy. The fir-trees that stood all around, taciturn, they were watching, too. The great pine-tree, he was the father of them all.

Little Huron children down by the river were gathering raspberries, and calling to each other. Did they not hear the blows of the wicked Babou's ax? How could they then care to look for raspberries and to laugh?

Old Mère Gaspard was picking everlasting flowers over there in that hilly pasture. She was going to make a bed of them. She was bending over her bag, and did not seem to listen to the cruel sounds. Did she not

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

know that the Father of them all was being killed? But she had such wrinkly eyes, and she stooped so,—it was probable that she did not know how very tall he was, and how far he put his arms out, like a priest blessing the hillside.

The blows of Babou's ax still rang against the resistant wood.

"Ma foi, he has the good heart!"

The little brown hands were tightly clasped.

"He will not yield to that cruel Babou."

A big, triangular gash began to show white at the broad base of the trunk.

"Is not that enough? Why will he not stop?"

Still the blows went on. The bronze features of the cutter were as hard as ever.

"It is almost time for the great tremble to come," Yvonne thought, "and then there will be such a groan, and he will fall over, the poor tree, with his beautiful arms outspread——"

She caught her breath with the horror of expectancy.

"Perhaps he will fall on Babou's head, and then he will be sorry, *le méchant*."

No, she could not stand it any longer.

THE FATHER OF THEM ALL

She ran up, and out gushed a torrent of expostulations upon stolid, astonished Babou.

"His children are all watching you. They are hating you for it."

Her words came quickly, and there was a sob behind them. She was too much Indian to cry, but she was French enough to be excited. Still, she was ashamed of the choke in her voice.

"He has been so brave, and stood so stoutly. Even now he will cure himself, the dear tree, if you do not touch him again with your stupid ax."

As Babou raised his arms imperturbably for the next blow that was to strike deep at the very heart of the wounded tree, Yvonne jumped up with all her tiny strength, and clung with both hands around his lifted arm, her little moccasined feet dangling some inches above the ground.

"Babou," she shrieked into his ear, "you will be sorry some other day. Arretez! Arretez!"

Her will glowed out of her eyes like two wild beasts, and her shrill words hit him like pebbles.

"Well, then, petite," he muttered, shaking

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

her off from his arm as if she had been a persistent kitten, "I will leave it alone. You are toute folle, but I will leave it alone."

And the tree afterward grew and flourished, and Yvonne often sat in the angle of its roots that protruded along the ground like great, gaunt, knotted fingers, and caressed the seamed and gummy scar where Babou's ax had made the hollow.

"Le pauvre!" she murmured. "When this one goes to heaven, the Blessed Virgin will lean against his trunk and then he will be all well."

And the branches of the tree, with their multifarious sighs, seemed to its little consoler to breathe a melancholy resignation.

Etienne Brusseau's house, where Yvonne lived, stands on a knoll, with a rising hillside behind it. The hillside is clothed with fir and pine trees, sparsely scattered. From the top of the hill, if one ever gets there through the cedar and juniper underbrush and the slides of rock near the summit, one looks down on the plateau where the Indian village lies. Let it be called La Jeune Vallette, though that is not its name. Little, rambling, vine-broidered houses,

THE FATHER OF THEM ALL

painted gray by wind and weather, they wander uncertainly over the irresolute streets, up above and away from the resolute white high-road that with French precision goes neatly from one Norman hamlet to another. Down by the high-road is the Huron Chapel, fashioned like the Holy House at Loretto, built for the Indians two hundred years ago when the remnant of their scattered tribe found refuge in this sequestered spot. The somber fir-woods are all about, above and below and on every side of the plateau; and there to the right the river St. Gabriel winds silverly through its fringing trees, and below the bridge, where one sees that flash of white, it takes its foaming leap into the deep and tortuous ravine. To the left, behind that hill, is the Herb-Gatherers' Village, white houses sprinkled in a green valley, but they are very far away, and no road goes there, only a trail through the woods and a foot-path through the meadows; so no one ever visits them. They are an idle folk, who dance all day Sundays, and speak a strange patois of their own.

Off to the far north, toward La Montagne Ronde, but away from Val Cartier, lies Les

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Cent Arpents, where other Indians live. It is very lonely to live there, and they are mostly old, old people, and some of them have never been even to Chateaubourg, where the White Sisters have a Convent with beautiful statues among the trees in their walled garden. There is where Yvonne Brusseau went to school. The Sisters were very good to her, and told her stepfather, Monsieur Brusseau, the moccasin-maker, that she was très aimable and très sage. "Despite her Huron blood," they had said among themselves, but they did not say it to her stepfather, for Monsieur Brusseau had married into the Huron tribe, and his wife, who had been Madame Tahour-enché, was little Yvonne's mother.

So Etienne took land in the Indian reservation, and built a house like the little Norman houses, with their gables and low eaves and small windows and thick walls, that the French cultivateurs live in and have always lived in since their great-grandfathers came over from Normandy hundreds of years ago and built homes in La Nouvelle France, just like the houses they had left behind them among the Normandy pastures.

But Etienne Brusseau's house was larger

THE FATHER OF THEM ALL

and more pretentious, and standing up there on the knoll with the fir-wood behind it, it seemed to command the village, as if it had been the manse of a seignory.

Some of the trees had been cut down for Etienne's winter firewood, and others to make a road through to the river-pasture where Etienne kept his cows.

But among those that were left was the great pine-tree, with its plume-tipped branches, its trunk that two men could not hold between outstretched arms, and its many mysterious voices.

"He talks the Huron tongue," said Yvonne to her cousin, Poléon Gros-Louys. The two children sat together at the foot of the pine-tree.

Yvonne, like the others of her tribe, spoke the French patois of the neighborhood. The Huron language had not been spoken among the Indians for years, being preserved only in surnames, which were still given to those of Huron descent, and in the patronymics which remained. There was also a big manuscript dictionary, which a Jesuit missionary long ago had compiled, now in the possession of Paul Tahourenché, Yvonne's uncle, of noble stock, who swept

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

out the Chapel and made toy canoes for a living.

"I know he talks the Huron tongue," Yvonne repeated. "I have heard Grandmère say some words, and they are all soft and gurgling, with little sighs in them—like that."

She listened awhile with a rapt expression on her face, while the wind played delicately in the branches.

Little Poléon was not given over to emotional imaginings.

"You say foolish things sometimes," he remarked, dryly. "You are eight years old, and you seem to know no more than Grandmère."

"Grandmère is wise, even though she is old," returned Yvonne. "When the tree was young,—oh, so many years ago, as long ago as there are needles on the tree, even as long ago as when Grandmère was little, like me;—we were all Indians here, and we talked Huron, and the tree was young then, and he learned the tongue, and now he is old he cannot forget, canst thou, dear tree?"

She put her cheek up against the trunk affectionately.

THE FATHER OF THEM ALL

"Sister Angeline says it is easy to learn when one is young."

"Sister Angeline knows only a few things," responded Poléon, with grave intolerance. "She can neither paddle nor swim, nor can she shoot a wild duck on the wing, nor catch the big trout in the rapids. All that I can do."

"It is true," replied Yvonne, admiringly. "You are very wise, Poléon."

"There is but one thing that makes me unhappy," continued Poléon, reflectively. "I am only twelve. It is such a long time one has to wait to be a man."

"And what will you do when you are a man, Poléon?"

"First, I will marry you, and then I will go to hunt the big moose up where the Mistassini River goes. Uncle Paul has told me about it."

This large future did not produce upon Yvonne the effect that the swarthy cousin had desired. Instead, her lip trembled.

"Do you mean that you will leave me alone while you hunt the big moose? I shall not like it to stay alone. For I suppose by the time that I am old enough to be married, papan and maman—tout le monde

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

—will be old and withered, and will be sitting in front of the fire, nodding at the logs when they turn and crackle. You will not go away and leave me alone, Poléon?"

"You would be afraid to be in the woods where the big moose are——"

"Poléon, I am not afraid when it thunders, nor am I afraid hardly ever. And if I should be afraid I would say my beads so fast that I would forget all about it."

"You were afraid when we went up the Montagne Ronde last summer,—the time that I shot two partridges."

Poléon glowed at the reminiscence.

"I was afraid of la Jongleuse, not of the woods. And you must remember, Poléon, that then I was only seven. There is much difference between seven and eight."

"There is no use in many words," said Poléon, bringing together his thin lips in a grim fashion that he had.

"I am going to marry you, and I am going to hunt the big moose."

Then it was that the feminine in Yvonne asserted itself.

"Perhaps I shall not want to marry you," she said, with a dainty triumph in her tone.

THE FATHER OF THEM ALL

"You will have to want to," returned Poléon. "I will make you."

"You will make—me—want—to marry you," said Yvonne, slowly, quite bewildered by this invincible position. "I cannot even make myself want to do a thing. Sister Angeline told me it would be a great virtue if I would learn the thirteen trials of Sainte Elizabeth. I tried to want to do it, but I could not make myself."

"But I can make you, I," said Poléon, wriggling up the tree trunk and looking down at her from over the lowest branch, far above her head.

"You will forget to make me," piped Yvonne.

"That is not my name," he called down. "My name is Qui-n'-oublie-jamais."

"Odilonrohannin! Odilonrohannin. Qui-n'-oublie-jamais," he chanted, in the topmost branches of the Father-of-Them-All.

Then—"Climb up here, if you can," tauntingly.

"I do not wish to climb," said Yvonne, standing at the foot of the tree and gazing up into the world of plumes.

"I am going down by the river to play

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

with Tissette and Evraud. We shall have a war-dance. I shall enjoy that much better."

She ran off, crooning, as she ran, an Indian song her grandmother had taught her:

"Wabosé, wabosé,
Where, ah!
Where, ah!
Little white one,
Are you going?
Wabosé, wabosé."

Her voice had a haunting, tenuous sweetness, like the siffleur's that whistles by the cold Canadian streams.

Poléon, despoiled of the masculine privilege of flaunting the unattainable in the face of femininity, climbed unhappily down from the tree.

These two children represented the best that there was in Huron stock. For two hundred years their tribe had been settled in the heart of a French people, there on their plateau of La Jeune Vallette. Scarcely differing in appearance from the French habitants around them, they yet held themselves apart and clung to the Huron traditions with tenacious pride. The black

THE FATHER OF THEM ALL

hair and eyes persist, to the last dilution, with Indian blood, but the other features become soon modified. The copper skin fades out sometimes with the first cross-breed.

Poléon seemed a reversal to a more primitive type, and bade fair to be the counterpart of his ancestor Gros-Louys, a son of Louys Amantácha, the interpreter, who has gone into history through his connection with the Jesuit missionary, Père le Jeune.

Here and there, along Yvonne's ancestral line, waved the plumes and clashed the sword of a French chevalier. Soldiers of fortune, they or their parents had emigrated with Rovernal, with Champlain, or with Montmagny, and some savage beauty had mitigated for them the horrors of the wilderness.

As Poléon walked slowly to the house, he saw the curé coming toward him.

"I am looking for Yvonne," said the Curé St. Clair.

"She is dancing a war-dance down by the river," said Poléon, with studied particularity. "Did you wish to talk with her about the Good God?"

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Up from the river came Yvonne's clear voice:

“Where, ah!
Little white one,
Are you going?”

The words lingered on the still air like autumn leaves that circle and circle before they reach the ground.

CHAPTER II

A DANSE DRAMATIQUE

Instead of the annual opera, La Jeune Vallette has a war-dance. The French-Hurons have carefully hoarded this tradition, being encouraged thereto by occasional visitors from Quebec, and once the Governor-General.

The dance is in three acts: Act I, Watching for the Enemy; Act II, The Attack; Act III, The Return.

Below the Falls, along the edge of the river gorge, is a fir-wood. You enter the wood just beyond the bridge where the Chateaubourg road crosses the St. Gabriel. An Indian trail is like the odor of violets. If you come too close you cannot perceive it at all. Where the coppery needles have a more slippery shine, there you walk. That is the trail. You must not try to remember your bearings, nor to note the landmarks. Let the trail lead you along, and by and by the sound of the rushing river down in its narrow ravine comes more faintly to your

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

ears. You reach an open green set mysteriously down into the heart of this somber wood. The grass is short here, and under the baby pines and firs the Indian pipes are standing in little white brotherhoods, transparent ghosts of some dim revel.

Here the danse dramatique is danced every August by La Jeune Vallette. From out the charmed circle of the fir-trees, no sounds of their revelry reach the outside world.

The habitan jogs along in his cart to Ancienne Vallette, while the olive-skinned people of the plateau shake the calibash and cry:

“Yo-hi-ouan.”

The village Curé, Father St. Clair, said mass every Sunday morning in the old Huron chapel. He liked its dim old age and naive suggestion of the forest. The silver was the direct gift of the great Louis to the Hurons, also the altar cloth, out of which looks the embroidered face of the Dauphin, with his tarnished gold-thread hair, his round, incoherent eyes, and his red, ropy lips. His expression is necessarily somewhat disjointed. This venerated portrait was embroidered by Madame La

A DANSE DRAMATIQUE

Pompadour and other noble and pious ladies of Louis' court. And, of a summer's day, the little pine-cones will tap against the leaded window, and sometimes an inquisitive squirrel pauses an alert instant, dramatic hand on breast, peering above the opened pane, when the Kyrie Eleison floats out on a still morning.

Father St. Clair was a meditative man, therefore he liked the Huron chapel, with its old-world pictures and historic memories, better than the parish church, gray and Gothic, which was the pride of the habitan.

He went to the fir-wood this morning, after mass, with his Life of St. Hieronymus. Unconsciously, he followed the trail, and it took him to the charmed green. He sat himself down at the foot of an outstanding fir and read:

"No labor is hard, no time is long, wherein the glory of eternity is the mark we level at."

He closed the book over his finger and thought. Long ago an emptiness had come into his life, and he had sought refuge against it in the priesthood. There is no sorrow more corrosive than emptiness. With his long, thin, reaching fingers, his

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

thin lips that continually settled and re-settled themselves into tired repose, his deep-set gray eyes with their always unanswèred look, he was as different as possible from his confrères of the provincial church, upon whose faces rested the sodden content, the thus-far-no-further peace that the Roman Catholic faith so often confers.

A little figure sat on the ground—a short distance away, turned sideways from Father St. Clair. He saw it as he sat there with his finger in his book. It was little Yvonne. She was swaying to and fro, as she swung a basket that depended from a hemlock bough. She crooned a lullaby. It was in French, but the refrain was Huron:

“Oua-oua, oua-oui,
Sleep, little daughter, sleep.
’Tis your mother watching by.
Swinging, swinging, she will keep
Little daughter, lullaby.
Oua-oua, oua-oui,
Oua, oua-oui.”

Yvonne was crooning seductively, but “little daughter” seemed uneasy in her cradle. It was, in fact, a baby fox that Poléon had given her. Perhaps youthful foxes are not accustomed to be rocked to

A DANSE DRAMATIQUE

sleep, or perhaps they do not enjoy a cradle song. Little Rénard manifested the same signs of agitation that other infants, under similar circumstances, show.

A pair of pointed ears appeared once above the basket-rim, and again they 'bobbed up, with bright restless eyes beneath them. That their mutinous efforts resulted in no further success was due to a small brown hand laid firmly upon the palpitating body of the unwilling "little daughter." But the crooning voice was hypocritically tender. Yvonne was trying a new cradle-song. The delicious tune of it rocked to and fro with those haunting cadences and strange harmonic dips and changes that characterize the habitan songs.

"Le premier jour de Mai,
Que barrai-je à ma mie,
Que barrai-je à ma mie?
Une perdriole.
Qui vient, qui va, qui vole,
Une perdriole.

Up you go, down you go, so-so, so-so——"

Father St. Clair did not read his St. Hieronymus; the little *berceuse* charmed him into a half-dream of the past.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

“Le second jour de Mai——”

Yvonne's berceuse had infinite possibilities; all the thirty-one days of May might be enlisted to calm a troubled child, and all things that creep or walk or fly might be laid at its feet.

“Le second jour de Mai,
Que barrai-je à ma mie,”

sang on Yvonne, but she had barely got to the *deux tourterelles* when Rénard leaped clear of his odious cradle. He wore a pink calico slip, belted most uncomfortably about his middle, and ruffled absurdly about the skirt. The gown had been fitted to him in the upright position, and now that he stood on all fours, the bow fluttering on his back and the ruffle flapping about his bushy tail, the “design” lost its fitness. Yvonne herself laughed as the pink calico fox trotted unconsciously away.

“Go then, thou,” she cried. “It is time for the second act to begin.”

She thrust her head out from under the branches. Her black, parted hair fell in straight locks down her brown cheeks.

You see now that she notes the distant presence of the enemy.

A DANSE DRAMATIQUE

Back and forth she creeps, now with her hand to her ear, now with her ear to the ground, till she makes a sudden retreat and crouches down low in the underbrush. The air is heavy with suspense. You can see the unconscious marauder drawing slowly towards the toils.

Now Yvonne throws all caution to the four winds of heaven. She rushes out from her ambush—and there sits Father St. Clair, with his solemn gaze upon her.

Yvonne sees him, and he is sacred in her eyes, not as the reverend Curé, but as valuable stage property. For the furore is upon her.

Her finger pointed at him, she sings again, liltingly, scornfully:

“C’etait un vieux sauvage
Tour noir, tout barbourilla.”

Then with a sudden change of voice she says:

“You are the old savage, Father. I have discovered you. You must call for your warriors. Now, quick.

“Ouich’ ka! Ouich’ ka.”

The reverend priest springs to his feet.

“Yo-hi-ouan!”

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

How splendidly his voice rings out in the war-cry!

"It is magnificent," says Yvonne. "Now you are the warriors. They have come."

Tauntingly the song continues:

"Avec sa vielle couverte
Et son sac à tabac.
Ouich' ka."

The arrows fly thick and fast. Hither and thither flees the helpless Curé; his black-skirted robe flaps out behind him like a crow's wings. His gray hair floats under his close cap. But the relentless pursuer is ever at his back.

"Ah, ah tenaouich' tenaga.
Tenaouich' tenaga, ouich' ka."

"I have shot you three times in the heart," says Yvonne, severely, fixing her eyes upon the flushed face of the obliging enemy.

"Why do you not fall dead?"

"Is it not possible that I may escape?" asks Father St. Clair.

"You have escaped, some of you, but you, you are the last foe, and you are to be the dead on the field.

A DANSE DRAMATIQUE

"How else should I sing the triumph song?

"Now, while I sing these last lines, I will shoot you again, even though it be for the fourth time. Then you fall.

"Ah, ah, tenaouich' tenaga."

"Yes, that is ravishing, so. You make a beautiful dead."

She is left alone now, with the frenzy of triumph in her unseeing eyes, and then the maddening dance begins. Her little yellow-moccasined feet twinkle up and down, her black hair streams, her arms wave. It is the great war-dance, transposed into the feminine key.

When it was all over and the panting little breast had ceased to heave, Yvonne stood quiet on the deserted battle-field. She put up her hands and smoothed down her black locks in a bewildered way. The Curé had resumed his seat by the huge old fir. His book was in his hand.

Ah, she was very wicked, she knew, it now. She went up to the Curé; she put two penitent hands upon his black-robed knees. Her eyes brimmed with tears.

"Dear reverend Father, was it a mortal sin?"

PART TWO



DEW-OF-THE-MORNING

“ He followed on the footsteps he had traced
Till in high woods and forests old he came.”
—*Tasso*.

CHAPTER I

ON THE ST. GABRIEL

He had written to his friend, Madge Van Eyck—it was characteristic of him that his most intimate friend was a girl: “After all, nature is best. Nature, nature. Perhaps the best I can do for the world and for myself is to live, in some obscure wilderness, a life as primitive and simple as that of the habitants and voyageurs whose little white-washed cottages sprinkle these green hills below the blue Laurentides.”

And she had written to him in reply:

“From nature, through art, to nature again. However, Pierce, your restless spirit will not long be satisfied with mere simplicity. You have gone through many experiences, but those not the most vital. I wonder how life itself will meet you.”

“Is not this life?” he thought, as he floated along a little Canadian stream, a few miles above its foaming shallow rapids.

He had two companions, one a young girl, olive-skinned and black-haired, the other an

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

old woman, whose darker hue showed her to be of unmixed Indian blood.

"Monsieur Villeaubille," said Yvonne, "zaire ees my grandmozaire's house, at zait montagne, far, far. See you zaire, gardez, gardez."

Her English was delicious, mixed as it was with French words and spoken with the Canadian-French accent, its quick, dainty upward inflection seeming to hold the thought in a sort of deferential suspense. She had, too, the trick, common among the habitants, of repetition for the sake of emphasis.

She spoke to him in English, except when she became much interested in the conversation, or when the theme taxed too heavily her slender vocabulary.

"Ze rivaire she wind much, and I zink we shall haf of a storm. And ze courante is against us, Monsieur Villeaubille."

Yvonne, according to her habit with other words, lingered caressingly over this last syllable. That particular prolongation was pleasing to the young man.

He glanced up at the sky where the clouds were gathering above the top of the Montagne Ronde, dark, heavy clouds,

through which the heat-lightning flashed fitfully.

"I do not fear ze storm, I," said Yvonne, "but look, grandmère, wat was zait? Some-zings wite ran past me, on ze vater."

Grandmère started, and looked about her uneasily.

"It was the moon's reflection in the stream, Mademoiselle Yvonne," said Willoughby.

From her place in the bottom of the boat grandmère muttered an unintelligible something.

In the shadow of the firs the canoe slid on almost noiselessly, when out of the silence a wail quivered in the air above their heads. Yvonne suppressed a cry of terror, and crouched down low in the canoe. Willoughby himself was startled by a voice so human, so melancholy, sounding in that solitude.

"I believe it is a child crying," he exclaimed. "Let us go to the shore."

"Non, non, nevaire, Monsieur." Yvonne's voice trembled, but she stopped the paddle with her hand as he began to reverse the canoe.

"Zaire was not ze place it sounded; it was above us. We vill go on, qvick, qvick."

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"It was a wild loon, perhaps, in passage," Willoughby said. "They have a human cry."

He was endeavoring to reassure himself as well as the others, for fear is somewhat contagious.

"It was not a loon, nor was it human," the old woman spoke out in French for the first time.

"Look there!" She pointed toward a bay of the river that ran up into a marshy meadow.

Willoughby looked, but in the twilight he saw nothing except the white mist slowly exhaling from the water and the flag-flowers along the meadow-edge.

"What is it?" he asked, his curiosity fairly aroused, for he perceived that it was something definite which his companions feared.

"Tell me, Mademoiselle Yvonne."

Silence met his question—the girl putting her finger to her lips with the gesture of one who dares not speak. Willoughby's vision became preternaturally acute as the weirdness of the situation impressed itself upon him. Watching the dusky shore, past which they were closely skimming, he observed a slight sinuous motion among the reeds of the

ON THE ST. GABRIEL

margin, and then something slid suddenly in front of the canoe. It might have been an eel or a water-rat. At a little distance from them, above the white moss of a bog, a tiny light wavered. It might have been a fire-fly. Yvonne also saw the motion and the light.

"It is She," the girl cried, suddenly bowing her head forward upon Grandmère's knees.

"La Jongleuse! She is following us to-night."

"Hush, do not speak her name," said Grandmère's husky voice, "or one of us will be taken."

Again Willoughby asked, and more earnestly, for an explanation.

"I will tell you, Monsieur Villeaubille, but it is somezings you vill not laike of hearing."

Then she continued rapidly in French, giving her version, somewhat modified, of the old legend current two hundred years ago among the Algonquins, and still preserved in tradition among the seignories of Rivière-Ouelle.

"She comes at twilight when the mist rises from the streams; when the whip-poor-will cries among the grasses, then her

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

voice is heard, quavering and moaning like a lost child in the lonely marshes. She treads softly on the white, spongy moss, and where her footprints are she leaves behind her little pools of water. One cannot see her, Monsieur Villeaubille. No, no. But one can see the rushes moving where she walks at twilight. For she gathers the pale-purple sticky flag-flowers for her hair. Her hair is long and waves in the breeze. Sometimes one feels it brush the cheek, like the touch of a dank water-weed. Evil, evil for one whom she touches, Monsieur."

"Oui, oui, evil, evil," echoed Grandmère's feeble voice.

"Where the alders droop and dip she loves to go, and there she sits and swings her feet in the water, and the cold low fog rises about her. The siffleur whistles in the woods. It is a warning. But the belated fisherman hears the splashing of her feet, and thinks the trout are leaping where the current is swift in the deep pool. He pushes his canoe under the low-hanging branches, and next morning one finds it empty."

"Oui, oui, empty, empty," Grandmère echoed.

"One can never see her, but sometimes her long robe, which is the color of evening, leaves a trail of little stars behind it, pale and yellow, among the sedges, or a sheet of bluish light on the water where the scum is like cream and the blue-winged dragon-fly darts. Then we know She has been there, the Jongleuse."

"Oui, oui, La Jongleuse," Grandmère muttered.

"And along the Rivière du Grand Desèrt, Monsieur Villeaubille, she floats at night. The little boy who gathers blue-berries in the swamps,—the sun sets while he is still far from home. Then he starts to return, and he sees flicker a little light, there, through the bushes, and he thinks it is the candle in the kitchen-window of his home. It is the Lady of the Flag-Flowers, for so we will call her, Monsieur; we dare not speak her name. He hears a call, faint, faint. He thinks it is his mother calling the cows in the pasture. He follows the call, so faint, so faint, faint, and that little, little light. In the morning, one knows that a child is lost."

"Oui, oui, lost, lost," echoed Grandmère.

"Her eyes are blue, blue, like the flag-

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

flowers she twines in her hair, and her lips are smiling always. She has many voices, like the wind in the firs, sighing, sighing; like the water on the shore, gurgling, plashing; like the little frogs that pipe in the spring; like the grasshoppers, crackling, clapping; like the little cricket, lonely, chirping; and sometimes you can hear her moan around the gray eaves of an empty house, when the dead trees break and fall on windy autumn evenings, and the long mosses swing like an old man's beard from the decaying hemlock."

"Where in heaven's name are we?" exclaimed Willoughby, glancing at the unfamiliar outlines of the landscape, dimly descried in the darkness.

"It is the *Rivière du Grand Desèrt*," said Grandmère, raising her head with more life than she had heretofore shown.

Willoughby, in his attention to the young girl's words, had unconsciously turned to the left and paddled up the little river as far as the white-moss bog that gives it its name of *Grand Desèrt*. Over the low-lands, a pale light shimmered uncertainly.

"Hasten to turn, *vite, vite*," cried Yvonne, clasping her hands nervously.

ON THE ST. GABRIEL

"The Lady of the Flag-Flowers has led us here."

Back again in silence they went, while Grandmère seemed to sleep in the bottom of the boat.

There were two hours more of paddling, but hardly a word was spoken. Grandmère's head had sunk upon her breast. Yvonne's gaze was fixed earnestly upon the young man's face, as if she found strength there. Willoughby, watching the prow as he sent it shooting through the water, had ever before his eyes the vague, mysterious image of the Lady of the Flag-Flowers.

They approached the hill-side on which stood Grandmère's little white house. The storm, that had been threatening for so long, seemed almost ready to burst above their heads.

"It is near midnight," said Willoughby, as he turned the canoe toward the shore.

Then, by a sudden impulse, he leaned toward Yvonne.

"You have not told me the name of La Jongleuse, Yvonne?"

"Non, non, for it is ze bad fortune to speak it."

"Nothing will harm you now, my child,"

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

he answered, as he sprang from the boat and pulled it up on the shore.

"If one speak her name, and the hour ees midnight, then she vill appear, and if she vill appear it be a sign of death."

He held out his hand to guide her to the bank, and when he felt her fingers within his own, a masterful desire grew strong in him. His persuasion should conquer her fear.

"Yvonne, tell me her name."

He put his arm about her to steady her as she wavered at his side.

"I shall let nothing harm you," and he tightened his clasp of her hand.

"Monsieur Villeaubille, vy make you me to speak? Her name, it ees Matshi Skeou," the young girl whispered. Her face, raised to his, was illuminated by a flash of lightning.

Then, in the intense blackness that followed, there was a deafening noise, an avalanche of sound crashing about them. A tree in the neighboring forest fell, struck by a thunderbolt.

Both ran to the canoe. Grandmère still sat in the boat, her head sunk upon her breast, motionless.

Yvonne laid a hand upon her shoulder, but the old woman did not raise her head.

ON THE ST. GABRIEL

"Grandmère," she cried, looking down into her face. Then, "Malheur! Elle est morte, morte," she shrieked. "La Jongleuse, la Jongleuse!"

It was true. The old woman was dead. Willoughby carried the burden to the house, where the husband and a married daughter awaited them.

He felt conscience-stricken. He knew that Yvonne would regard him as responsible for the calamity. Perhaps the superstition had laid hold a little on him. At any rate, he sincerely repented that he had made the young girl speak the dreaded name. At the same time, he felt tenderly toward her in thinking how she had yielded to his solicitation. And Grandmère was old and feeble. Such deaths are not uncommon among the very aged.

"What would you like to have me do?" he asked her, after the grandmother's body had been tenderly laid upon a bed.

"Shall I go for a priest?"

She looked at him with reproach in her eyes, but her voice was low and sweet.

"Yes, Monsieur Villeaubille, if you would be so good."

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

And he ran down to the shore again, in the gathering storm, happy to do her bidding.

"I fear she will never forgive me," he thought, "until I have taught her not to believe in her Lady of the Flag-Flowers."

So he resolved to teach Yvonne Brusseau, to read with her, and talk with her, and open her eyes to the broader life of which now she knew nothing.

As he stooped over the canoe, he heard light steps behind him on the grass. It had been an uncanny experience even for Willoughby, the night, the storm, the mysterious glimpses of a strange and solitary country, the weird tale of Indian superstition, the dead woman, who had stirred not in the canoe, Yvonne's cry, "*La Jongleuse, la Jongleuse!*"—no wonder that he started when he heard the unexpected sound behind him.

No wonder that a wild fancy made his heart beat quick.

A slight figure stood beside him. Yvonne's voice spoke.

"Monsieur Villeaubille, I would not zait you retourn to ze village. Ze time ees too, too malfortunate."

ON THE ST. GABRIEL

"But I wish to go if it will serve you, Yvonne."

"I haf fear for you. I vish zait you not go. Gardez! How dark ze naight makes itself!"

"Yvonne, I fear nothing."

"Monsieur Villeaubille, tell me true, true."

The young girl stepped up to him and laid her two hands lightly, one on each of his shoulders.

"Had you not fear zees momante? Haf you not ven you hear my stepping zink ouf ze Jongleuse?"

Willoughby laughed.

"Zen you vill not go. It ees ver' bad sign ven one hass her in ze mind."

Willoughby felt himself swayed by the force of the young girl's will. He also felt himself swayed by a contrary force impelling him to go, as if in some way his decision imported much to him. The Lady of the Flag-Flowers had cast her spell over him. Would she conquer? Would he yield?

"Grandmère ees dead. Ze priest, he may come in ze morning. I vill be content of zait."

Willoughby turned the boat upside down

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

upon the shore, and started back toward the house with Yvonne. A long, low cry came waveringly from the stream, and a cold touch was laid upon his forehead. He raised his hand to brush it away, but his hand met only the empty air.

"Pshaw!" he said to himself. Then aloud: "Yvonne, did you feel that bat?"

"No, Monsieur Villeaubille."

A little winding path led through the trees to the house. It was very dark, and the branches which they divided across their path sprang back again behind them with snaps and crackles.

Willoughby thought he heard little movements, now on this side, now on that, sometimes in front, sometimes behind.

"Yvonne, are there three of us here?"

The girl disengaged her hand from his arm, and with an inarticulate scream, flung from him through the trees and vanished.

Then a voice came to Willoughby, low and flute-like, whether from above, from beside, or from within, he could not distinguish.

"You have yielded through fear of the Jongleuse. Therefore, you will fear her always, and she will bring death to you once."

ON THE ST. GABRIEL

In blind haste, he groped his way to the open door of the cottage, through which the light straggled. As he sought its refuge something white and wavy disappeared in the wood. It might have been the slim, white trunk of a young birch that a fluttering bough disclosed and then concealed again.

Yvonne was there before him, kneeling by her grandmother's side, absorbed in her prayers. The old man, too, was praying, for the Hurons were very devout, and always had recourse to their rosaries in times of trouble. There was no room for the young man in the cottage, so, after a while, the aunt made him a couch on the hay in the little barn, where he lay, long awake, seeing the flashes of lightning through the chinks in the walls, hearing the rain fall in a steady monologue of patter on the tin roof above him, and thinking of the evening's occurrences, sometimes with a smile, and sometimes with a shiver.

Grandpère, in his two-wheeled cart, carried his wife's body back to the village the next day. Pierce Willoughby went with the others to attend the services in the Huron chapel and sat beside Yvonne.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Then, just outside the chapel, she was laid to rest, in the Indian burying-ground.

Pierce Willoughby was the only stranger in this Huron village where he was to spend his summer. He was with the family of Etienne Brusseau, the moccasin merchant.

Willoughby had finished his four years at a western university. In the *mêlée* of college affairs, he had been an ardent participant. Now he was merely a straggler on the edge of life's battle. He had entered college an evangelical Baptist, with the intention of following his father's vocation, the ministry. But since that time he had passed through as many phases in his inner experience as he had taken Double Minors in the university curriculum. The close of his university course had left him a liberal in religion, a radical in politics, and at a loss how to conform his lofty ideals of life with the practical necessities of living.

His latest theory had been that civilization itself was responsible for misery and crime, such as he had come into contact with during his sociological studies. The abolishment of city life, with its complexities and concentrations, seemed to him a desirable

ON THE ST. GABRIEL

end. He had resolved that, when it was possible, he would put into practice his progressive ideas as to a retrogressive civilization, and go into the country, where, like Tolstoi, he could live simply, and labor alike with his hands and his head.

He had been called, by his practical fellows, a visionary and an extremist. However, it was the rapid development of a fertile mind and a susceptible nature that had made him run the gamut of so many changes. He had not had the maturity that holds an argument in suspense. In reality, he was open to the charge, not of too many transitions, but of too many decisions. His mind had grown a surplus of crops during the last four years, and needed to lie fallow.

He had secured, upon his graduation, a position on the staff of a western paper, which would be open to him in the autumn. And for his summer outing he had decided to find some remote spot, where he could get close to nature and to a primitive people.

So it is that, on a quiet July evening, we found him, with his Huron companions, following the windings of the little Canadian stream.

CHAPTER II

AN OPEN MIND

It would have been difficult to determine which learned the more, the university graduate or the French-Huron girl, the sauvagesse, as she naively termed herself. Willoughby found in Yvonne a fascinating combination of the two races from which she was sprung. She had the quickness, the light-heartedness, the vivacity of the French, with the perseverance, the conservatism, and something of the subtlety of the Indian.

Willoughby read English with her in the three books that he happened to have with him, Tennyson, Marcella, and Shakespeare.

The lyric poet became her delight, the novel with a problem was a cold plunge for her, but she stood it bravely. But of the great dramatist she never tired.

"Gif me more of your Shakespère," she would say again and again, and as they read together of the Forest of Arden, Pierce thought that he himself was there.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

“Eet ees so nice,” she would say. “So ver’ ravissant.”

Willoughby had not expected to find an intellectual congeniality in his pupil, but even that was present to enhance the pleasure of these “lessons.” The lessons, by the way, must have been on the Meisterschaft system, being largely conversational. Yvonne’s comments on life and things were piquant and sometimes sagacious.

“Marcella—she has sorry for ze poor peoples.” Yvonne struggled for self-expression in the foreign tongue.

“Zhe bring zem her—vat zhe know—for zey not well—instruct. Zhe regarde zem for to know better how zey haf ze feeling in ze heart.”

Willoughby listened keenly, for he knew that Yvonne was leading up to some definite point.

“You come here, Monsieur Villeaubille, to regarde les Hurons, n’est-ce-pas, an’ seek well vat zey haf at ze heart. So, for to be —le meilleur—instruct? J’ai raison, Monsieur?”

Pierce was astonished at her acuteness.

“No, no, Yvonne,” he said. “This life of yours, though it is different from mine, is

AN OPEN MIND

better. The world would be happier if there were no cities, and we all lived so."

"An' no great city vaire one read an' understan' and vaire much peoples live?"

Willoughby tried to explain to her his latest theory. She shook her head helplessly. The ultra-modernism of it was too much for her.

"Vat for you not life here all ze days, zen?" she inquired.

Then for the first time the idea came to Willoughby as a practical possibility that after he had accumulated some modest sum of money he might return to La Jeune Vallette. To farm, to lumber, to trap, to write—such would be the course of his days. With Yvonne's presence at his side, the life seemed charming.

Yvonne's voice awoke him from his day-dreaming.

"It mus' be zait I go. My cousin Poléon return zis night of ze Restigouche contree."

They were under a wild-cherry tree, in a pasture near the house.

What was that? A strange voice called, a man's voice, and the words were strange. The liquid Indian syllables rippled on the air. Yvonne leapt to her feet with a laugh.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Poléon," she exclaimed. Then, to Willoughby's inquiring look: "It is my Indian name, — Dew-of-the-Morning, it mean in your English."

Somehow, Willoughby did not enjoy the mention of this cousin whom he had not yet seen, with his claim upon Yvonne's time, and his intimate name for her, which Willoughby had not even known.

That evening he wrote to Madge Van Eyck. She had been a neighbor of his in an eastern town, where his father's church had been, before he was called to the west. "What has civilization done for the modern girl that is worth while?" he wrote. "Yvonne has never read George Meredith, never seen a Poster Lady, never heard Camille, and yet, in her setting, she is perfect."

Madge wrote in reply: "It is only you, then, that spoil the picture. And are not you inconsistent, when you find primitive simplicity so delightful, to try and educate it away?"

This letter of Madge's irritated Pierce. He took it from his pocket one day, and read it for the third time.

"She doesn't believe in me," he said to

AN OPEN MIND

himself. "She thinks I am pursuing a fad, whereas I have struck at the heart of life itself."

He did not see much of Yvonne for the next few days.

Gros-Louys, the cousin, hung around her when she was busy with household or garden duties, and at the other times when Willoughby had been accustomed to give her lessons.

Willoughby, left to himself, began to feel a little lonesome.

"Can it be possible," he thought, "that she actually prefers a young hunter's society to mine?"

He was young, and the idea nettled him.

Then he began to analyze his own feelings and discovered that he was jealous.

"And why not?" he said to himself, angrily. "She is pure, beautiful, and capable of the intensest feeling. What she has not is the superficial gloss of society. That I do not want. My friends will soon find out that my ideas are not mere words."

Under the general thought of his "friends" there lurked a more particular sub-consciousness.

It was at one of these times when Yvonne

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

and Gros-Louys were together that Willoughby received a letter from Madge.

It was a little patronizing in tone, twitted him playfully about his "Indian princess," and ended with an announcement of her engagement to Horace Fenton, "whom, of course," Madge said, "you must know. His people spent their summers in Spuyten Kill, and were our neighbors."

"Remember him!" Willoughby laughed. He remembered Miss Van Eyck's playful analysis of his character.

"Well, that's the way with women," he said aloud, as he tossed the letter into his drawer, where its mates of the same chirography lay.

He felt that he had thus completely summed up the light and unstable qualities of the race of women.

"And I really thought at one time I loved her a little," he said.

He recalled their long walks over the Spuyten Kill hills together, and the evenings on the cool piazza at Orchardhurst. And how she had clasped his hand in both hers when he bade her good-bye, and said that his friendship meant much to her.

"And now engaged to that pale-haired

AN OPEN MIND

spook of an architect, Fenton!" he muttered.

The sound of voices from the river path sent him to his window, and there, picking her way from stone to stone through the boggy field between the wild-rose bushes and the tall, purple milk-weeds, came Yvonne. Gros-Louys was behind her, carrying on his head his birch-bark canoe.

She was really a beautiful girl, with a fawn's grace and freedom in her movements. How charmingly she balanced herself from stone to stone, and what vivacity in her quick turns and glances as she tossed back her sallies at Gros-Louys!

Now her words came up to him, as she poised herself on the stone wall before descending, her two arms outspread, holding the branches of the wild cherry tree on either side of her, and her head, with its shining black topknot, tilted sideways toward her cousin.

"Lui, je ne l'aime pas, et toi je ne t'aime point," she said, with pretty emphasis, and then leapt down and ran into the house.

"Lui, je ne l'aime pas," he repeated her words. They were talking then of love. The idea dawned upon him gradually.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Yvonne and himself, and—love. And she had said she did not love him. At that moment he began to love her.

“Et toi, je ne t’aime point.”

He was glad of the “point.”

CHAPTER III

THE PIQUE-NIQUE

There came a day when Yvonne was to take the younger children of the family for a "pique-nique" to the woods. She chose the pine woods below the Falls. Willoughby was asked to go, also Gros-Louys.

As it neared sunset, Willoughby succeeded in getting Yvonne by herself. Gros-Louys had gone for water to the spring that trickled down over the rocks in the Bois-des-Erables. The children were exploring the little path that swung dizzily around the face of the cliffs above the river. Yvonne and Willoughby rested themselves on the coppery needles at the foot of a huge old fir. The rushing of the waterfall came soft to their ears. The shafts of pinkish sunlight penetrated sparsely the twilight of the wood. Yvonne's black head leaned against the scarred gray tree-trunk, and Willoughby was stretched at her feet.

"This is the first of September," he said.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"I must leave these solitudes soon and work for a living."

"And how ees eet you vill vork, Monsieur? Vit your hands?"

"No, Yvonne, with my head. I shall write for a newspaper and be none the better for it. And people will read what I write and be none the better for that. But by and by I shall return here and live as your people do, and then——"

He looked up into her velvety eyes, which dilated as they rested on his face.

"Then, Yvonne—I shall want you."

"You vill vant of me, Monsieur? And vy?"

"I shall want to be simple, like you, Yvonne, and to live happily as our ancestors did; to toil with the hands a little, as your father does, in the field, and to love, Yvonne, to love—I—to love you, and you to love me, here in the forest."

He took her hand and pressed it to his lips.

With his words the love in his heart expanded to fuller growth.

"Monsieur, vous m'aimez-au grand serieux! Moi, Yvonne Brusseau, une sauvagesse?"

"Oui, ma chérie, je t'aime avec tout le coeur."

THE PIQUE-NIQUE

He rose and drew her with him to her feet. The blue eyes and the black eyes met and pledged each other in deep draughts of gazing.

"Alors, Monsieur," with a superb motion of surrender, she put her hands about his head, drew his lips down to hers, and kissed him.

"Monsieur," whispered Yvonne, "I shall go vit you to ze great ceety and learn much tings?"

"No, my Yvonne, you will stay here and wait for me, and I will come back soon."

"An' what for, Monsieur, I shall not go vit you and learn ze manière of you peoples an' learn not be sauvagesse no more?"

"Yvonne, you are like a violet, one of those little purple-lined violets that we find in the springy moss in the Bois-des-Erables. If we should pluck it up and take it into the city and plant it there on the Rue Fabrique by the Basilique, would it bloom and live? No one would look at it. It would die.

"And it is so with you, sweet. You belong here in the forest, where you were born. I will not ask you to live my life, but I will live yours."

She had been listening to him intently. Then she exclaimed:

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

“Zait ees not right so. Ze poesie say—”

And springing away from him, she stretched out her arms yearningly toward the western sun that quivered through the trees. Her black eyes were full of longing.

“Across ze hills an’ far away
Beyon’ zeir utmos’ perple reem,
An’ deep into ze dying day
Ze happie preencess follow heem.”

Her rich voice died away with a passionate quaver. If she had been on the stage one would have said that her art was perfection.

“I am ze preencess an’ I follow you, Monsieur, so, like ze poesie you teach me say.”

She ran up to him and put her arms about him pleadingly.

“You vill take me, Monsieur? You vill not go way from Yvonne?”

With a young girl fluttering upon his breast, her cheek against his neck and melting eyes meeting his own, what could a young man do? Willoughby thought grimly of his father’s parsonage fronting the straight, unshaded street, and of himself opening the iron gate, an Indian beauty upon his arm. Then he thought of his bachelor den at the Hall, and of the dingy

THE PIQUE-NIQUE

office down-town, where a city editor's duties awaited him. These three places refused to relate themselves in any manner to Yvonne Brusseau, whom he held in his arms.

Twilight comes early in a fir-wood, and already the dusk began to creep like a haunting dream through the trees.

"You haf fear," cried Yvonne, in her mellow, piercing voice, pushing the young man from her.

"La Dame aux Glaïeuls hass come between us and makes you fear. You haf ze look upon ze face."

And, in truth, Willoughby's discomfort had been reflected in his features.

"Ze Lady of ze Flag-Flowers! It ees She, it ees She," wailed Yvonne.

"Why talk such folly, Yvonne, my dear? You do not believe in La Jongleuse. You have told me so."

"I haf say zait ven I am vit you. Par-example, one cannot know all zings. Zere is somezings, triste, mysterieuse, zait make you go an' I—I rest here—an' nevaire, nevaire vill you be return for Yvonne."

"Do you love me?" said Pierce, energetically.

"Oui, Monsieur."

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"And I love you. Then nothing will come between us. I will return when I can make a home for you, and you will wait for me, and be true to me?"

She did not answer.

"Yvonne."

"Oui, Monsieur."

"You will wait for me?"

"I don' know zait," she said, coquettishly.

The children's voices were heard coming, and Gros-Louys' deep bass, singing a French-Canadian boating-song:

"Par derrier chez mon per'
Lui ya-t-il un bois joli.
Le rossignol y chant,
Et le jour et la nuit.
Aurai-je Nanette?——"

"But you love me?"

Pierce was urging her with more vehemence than he had heretofore shown.

Yvonne listened, not to the near, but to the far-off voice:

"Aurai-je Nanette?
Je crois que non.
Aurai-je Nanette?"

"Yvonne!"

THE PIQUE-NIQUE

"Ze to love an' to wait, zey be ver' different ting," laughed Yvonne.

"You have been fooling me," said Pierce. "You love your cousin, and you are going to marry him."

"Aurai-je Nanette?
Je crois que oui,"

came the far-off voice, nearer now.

"Moi! Gros-Louys!" Yvonne's scornful laugh pealed through the wood.

She ran from him now, gathering up her skirts to leap over a fallen trunk, on her way to regain her fellow-picknickers. They were halloaing to her from the homeward path.

Her voice mingled with the others in the familiar French-Canadian chorus:

"Par derrier chez mon per'
Lui ya-t-il un bois joli.
Le rossignol y chant
Et le jour et la nuit."

Faintly it floated back to him, a wistful melody. And again Gros-Louys' splendid, passionate basso:

"Aurai-je Nanette?
Je crois que oui."

CHAPTER IV

A FANCY

What a strange disease love is! How it makes the feet light and the heart full—the head swim, and the arms ache! How the divergent roads of life converge to one, and that one leads to Her! How the Past drops away, and the Future closes up, and the Present envelops us in its luminous mantle!

It was the day before Willoughby's departure. Yvonne, elusive and baffling since the day of the "pique-nique," would not go for a walk with Willoughby, as he desired. He went alone, following a wood-path that wound in and out in a way that wood-paths have, till it finally emerged in a little clearing, where the *Petite Rivière* empties into the larger stream. He sat down on a stone by the water's edge. The moon, like a great expanding flower, blossomed through the fringe of alder trees on the further side of the river. Occasionally a fish leaped up from the still, brown water. A blackbird whistled. On a hill-

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

ridge in the west the taciturn firs stood up, black against the lemon-colored sky. Delicate spirals of mist began to float upward and spread out over the water. Willoughby thought of Yvonne and was unhappy. Grimly he reflected that he had been able to cure her of her superstition, but could not cure himself of his love.

Then a figure, silently as the mist comes, arose on the other side of the Petite Rivière. Still as a fir-tree it stood. The pale oval of the face was framed fantastically with dark flowers.

"Yvonne!" called Pierce.

There was no answer.

Then, "Yvonne!" again, was followed by a cry from the other side, indistinct and eerie.

"Malheur! Malheur! La Jongleuse!"

Straining his eyes through the twilight, Willoughby saw that the figure had disappeared. He was alone.

What an elfish fancy of Yvonne's! Or had he been dreaming?

When he bade her good-bye the next morning, she looked reproach at him.

"You do not understand," he murmured. "You cannot go with me. Why will you

A FANCY

not be kind? Promise you will not forget me."

"Ze good Saint Antoine, he know zait I am not capable to forget."

Then the little train came puffing in, odorous of the wood which it burned, and out of its one car the few passengers alighted. An excursion party of French people from the Lac St. Gabriel, ten miles away, and Poléon Gros-Louys returned from guiding two "riches Americains" to Lake St. John. Pierce and the one other passenger, a woman with a hamper of moccasins for a shop in Quebec, stepped aboard. Some men piled on more wood behind the engine, every one cried "Au revoir" and "Bon voyage."

Yvonne handed him, through the car window, a bunch of the purple fire-weed and waxy pink dog-bane, and he was off. The train twisted its way through the beautiful Chateaubourg valley, past the meadows powdered white with daisies, spangled with buttercups, and ruddy with sorrel; the hill-sides dotted with the little houses, dazzling white in the September sunlight, gray-roofed, almost to the ground, and then in sight of Quebec, its metal roofs sparkling

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

like gold, its many steeples pointing upward, and the gray citadel crowning all.

And in his young, confident way, Pierce imagined himself returning a year, two years later, still with the same ideals in his head—as he never was to return—and finding Yvonne, with the black hair and the earnest gaze, basket-weaving—as he never was to find her again.

CHAPTER V

YVONNE MAKES A PROMISE

During the year that followed Willoughby's departure, Yvonne developed from childhood to womanhood. Her love for Willoughby, though only a sentiment, and a waning one, had opened her eyes to unknown possibilities. She longed for something—she knew not what. The village life became distasteful to her. She suffered keenly, and dimly reproached her lover in her heart. He had taught her what was better, and then left her to what was worse. Though she did not express it definitely, this was what she felt.

Yvonne sat so much by herself, alone, with folded hands, that her mother feared she would turn *religieuse*. She would not even go with her family when they made their annual visit, with other Hurons, to Rivière-du-Loup.

Her love for Pierce Willoughby was tinged with a shade of resentment. He wrote to her still, it is true, but why did he not come? she thought.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

And she wrote to him. That was her only hold on the fascinating outside world.

Time moves so slowly at La Jeune Vallette one does not realize the breakneck speed it has in a city editor's office.

Work, unromantic and untheoretic, lorded it over Pierce Willoughby, and he bowed under the yoke. He, too, was developing. There is nothing that will knock the dreaminess out of a man faster than to slave for a managing-editor, of tireless energy and iron will. For sheer lack of time to think, Willoughby was losing his idealism, and replacing it with socialism, it is true, but of the practical and every-day sort.

As his weekly letters to her testified, he had not forgotten Yvonne. Though his Canadian summer had faded away into dreamland, yet her image was clear before him. He kept upon his desk her picture, taken the autumn after his departure by a traveling photographer. The likeness was not good, except about the eyes. They looked straight out of the picture at him with all their old-time depth and softness. There was, perhaps, a shade of sadness in the expression.

"I will go to her," thought Willoughby,

YVONNE MAKES A PROMISE

"when another year is over, and I can get two weeks off."

But he did not say he was coming, for he imagined she would tire of his continual assurances.

He felt that Yvonne eluded him a little, but he loved her all the more. So, thinking of her, he did not think of other women. He had reached the equilibrium of manhood. His heart was fixed on the far-off hope.

During that second summer, Poléon Gros-Louys laid siege to Yvonne, in the silent, savage fashion. He would follow her everywhere, and do her bidding always. He was content to paddle her for hours on the river, rewarded by the sight of her in his canoe, though she would not speak a word to him.

"Yvonne," said he, on one of these wordless voyages, "I can stand this no longer. We must go to Father St. Clair and be married."

"You are good, Poléon," she replied, simply, "but I cannot marry you."

Then he broke out tauntingly:

"You are thinking of that American, so white-handed, who played with you. He

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

will never come back again. It amuses him to write to a little Indian girl. He is laughing this moment with some blue-eyed American lady, perhaps she is even his wife, and he is showing her your letters."

"You lie," cried Yvonne. "But he may show my letters to all the world. I say nothing in them. That is not why I cannot marry you."

"You are not promised to him?"

"No, Poléon, I am not."

"But I have heard you say to him that you would never forget him."

"It is the truth, my cousin. I will never forget him. An Indian does not forget."

Something in her tone made Poléon look at her twice.

"Ma chérie!" he exclaimed.

It was the first term of endearment he had ever used toward her.

Then he went on:

"I love you so much, Yvonne, that I must have you. By our Blessed Lady, I must."

"How much do you love me, Poléon?"

"As the trout loves the pool, as the ouananiche the rapids, as the stag the mountains—so I love you," said the swarthy hunter. "I cannot live without you."

YVONNE MAKES A PROMISE

"As the kingfisher loves his prey," said Yvonne, "so you love me, Poléon, dead or alive."

"It is so," said Poléon, gravely, "I would rather have you dead than another's."

"That is wrong," answered Yvonne. "Father St. Clair says it is a mortal sin to love anything so."

"If you promise me, Yvonne," said Poléon, "I need not commit the mortal sin. For I know that if you promise me you will be true."

"I will promise you, Poléon, that if I am ever married—to another——"

"If you are ever married to another!" broke in Poléon, explosively.

"You will kill him," finished Yvonne, quietly.

"I *will* kill him," he repeated.

"But it will be a mortal sin," the girl added.

Then, "Dear Poléon," she whispered, as he lifted her out of the canoe.

There was something in his barbaric nature akin to hers.



CHAPTER VI

BLOWS A FAIR WIND

The second summer after her marriage Madge Fenton and her husband, Horace, took a summer outing in Canada. On their way down the St. Lawrence they spent a few days at Rivière-du-Loup. It is a quiet little watering-place, and besides the sea-bathing, the golf, and the inevitable hotel dances in the evening, there is little to interest American visitors. The American summer resorter is not content with such simplicity as is his Canadian cousin.

The Fentons, at first, found much amusement in sitting on the hotel piazza, quiet observers of Canadian provincial manners. The Quebec girl, with her tightly-stayed undersized figure, fussy clothes, frizzled hair, after the fashion of the royal princesses, and sailor hat tilted forward, is as different a type from the New York girl as if she belonged to another race and continent.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Have you heard that the Indian basket-makers are coming here to-day, eh?"

A Quebec lady, with white cotton gloves on her hands and diamonds in her ears, addressed Hrs. Fenton.

"Are they, indeed?" said Madge. "Where do they come from?"

"They are Hurons from La Jeune Vallette. You'll have been there, eh? There's a lot of folks goes out to see the Falls from Quebec. You'll just be on your way to Quebec now, I fancy?"

The Indians had their booths in a long lane leading up from the beach on the sandy street. Daily they brought out their wares and stolidly exposed them in front of the hotels.

One among them, a young girl, attracted attention. She sat on the floor of her little booth, curled up among the bright-colored satiny straws and glistening olive-green strings of sweet grass. She was always busy with her plaiting and weaving and ready with a nod and smile for the passers-by whom she knew. Her brown, delicate-skinned face was a perfect oval; her smile displayed teeth white and small like a child's; her black hair was soft and smooth; and her eyes lit up her whole expression.

BLOWS A FAIR WIND

"The girl would really be handsome," said Horace Fenton, "if one of your New York tailors should get hold of her."

"She is a beauty!" exclaimed Madge, warmly. "Let's go talk to her."

They discovered that she talked English, and they were more than ever charmed by her wonderful eyes.

Madge, always on the alert for new experiences, pleaded for lessons in basket-weaving, and these the girl promised to give her. During the first lesson Madge found out her name, Yvonne Brusseau.

As she and her husband were looking at some sweet-grass fans of Yvonne's making, Madge said in a low voice to her husband:

"This is Willoughby's girl, Horace, Yvonne Brusseau."

"Monsieur Villeaubille?" the girl spoke quickly, looking up from the porcupine-quill embroidery upon which she was engaged. "You know heem? He rest vit' us in my stepfazer's house—eet ees two years, long time ago."

"He is a friend of ours," Madge replied. "We have often heard of you from him."

"Mais," added Yvonne afterwards, when she and Mrs. Fenton were strolling through

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

the woods together, "je ne suis pas sa blonde."

She used the St. Gabriel provincialism for sweetheart.

"Vous n'en êtes pas capable, petite brunette," laughed back Madge.

Two weeks went by at Rivière-du-Loup, during which the friendship between Madge and Yvonne ripened. Madge learned of the Shakespeare readings; of Yvonne's convent schooling; of her cousin Poléon, "le grand chasseur;" and of the simple village-life at La Jeune Vallette.

"How charming it must all be!" she exclaimed. "How I envy you your life, Yvonne!"

Yvonne laughed, showing her pretty white teeth.

"So Monsieur Villeaubille say. But he not come back no more. So you, too, Madame, but I see you nevaire again."

There was the shade of a question in her voice, and wistfulness in her black eyes.

Madge took her hand impulsively.

"If it be God's wish, Yvonne, we shall meet again."

"Le grand Dieu, he not trouble himself vit so little affair as of mine. Mais, ze good

BLOWS A FAIR WIND

St. Antoine, I pray to heem zait he send Yvonne her wishes."

"And what is that, my dear?"

"~~I am capable of more zan zis~~" with a dramatic gesture over the woven things heaped about them. "I have visions zat come to me, an' voices zait I hear like Jeanne d'Arc. But zey are not ze blessed Angels. Non, non."

Yvonne laughed again, and said no more.

The stay at Rivière-du-Loup had ended, and Madge and Horace took the Saguenay trip to Lake St. John. Up that strange volcanic-riven gorge where the still, black waters lie, watched over by the measureless silence of its cliffs—and then the Lake St. John country with its wild forests and rushing streams, and the one great hotel inexplicably modern among the cleared lumbering-camps along the shores of the mighty lake.

Madge and Horace sat in the luxurious dining-hall under the softened radiance of electric lights. White-capped maids moved noiselessly over the polished floors, carrying trays of imported delicacies among the cosmopolitan assemblage of guests. There were Englishmen making the tour of the

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"provinces"; Canadians, both French and English; and Americans of every type. There was the sporty New York alderman, who had just exchanged his leathern hunting-breeches and spiked boots for an evening suit; and at the next table Milord Anglais, who rented the Great Cascapedia River.

"Horace, there is Professor Willings," said Madge, looking toward a studious-browed man, who with two young men occupied a table near them.

"They say he has a lodge on the Mistassini River where he lived alone for a summer, talking only with Indians and eating frogs' legs and crows' meat."

"And there is a broker, I know," said Horace, "who's on the New York Exchange. He's got a good coat of tan, though."

"And that stately gentleman there," said Madge, "has been pointed out to me as the Bishop of Labrador, whose diocese includes this Lake St. John country.

"No, I will not have *bisque glacée*." This to the maid. "Bring me blueberries and cream."

"How strange it seems, Horace, to be refusing *bisque glacée* where there are bears chained behind the house!"

BLOWS A FAIR WIND

"And playing golf," said Horace, "within shouting distance of Montagnais wigwams."

"And a caribou-hunt in the morning," added a young man at their table, "and come home to lead a cotillion in the evening."

To fish for the ouananiche in the pools about the Grand Discharge and to shoot the rapids of the Saguenay in a canoe are the two events of a visit to Lake St. John.

Madge was an enthusiastic sportswoman, and the ouananiche is the king of game fish. The lithe curves of its satiny body as it leaps in silvery ellipses again and again from the water in a dazzling shower of spray, this sight alone is recompense for the disappointment that awaits the amateur angler when the spirited creature jumps from the hook almost at the boat's rim and drops a plumb line downward, a glistening streak to depths unknown.

"And now for the rapids!" said Madge, as she and her husband stood on the purple rocks that heap the shore of the great lake about the Island House.

"I have hired two Montagnais," said Horace, "who are, I believe, specially skilled with the canot d'écorce, and will, if any one can, take us through alive."

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"How gruesome you are!" exclaimed Madge, clearing at a bound a particularly wide chasm between two rocks, with the glorious sense of freedom that a woman in a short skirt enjoys.

"But it's dangerous," insisted Horace, whose caution was greater than his wife's, "and I value my life, and yours, too, dear."

"And where would the pleasure be without the danger?" asked Madge, surveying her husband from her vantage-point of higher rock. "Look, there are our guides. How silent these Montagnais are! I wish they would chatter a bit. One would feel more cheerful."

They climbed down the rocks to the narrow beach where they were to embark. Two canoes were there, each with two Indians.

"But we are to go in the same canoe," said Madge.

"Non," muttered one of the guides. "Much danger. Better one. Not take three, one canot."

He shook his head and looked loweringly at the other three Indians. All four shook their heads, muttering, "Non, non."

"I will not be separated from you,"

BLOWS A FAIR WIND

exclaimed Madge. "Think how I should feel if you should be caught by the rapids, and I should go safely. We must be together."

Horace laughed at her folly, but signified her wish to the Indians. Two of them turned away, as if washing their hands of so foolhardy a proceeding. Their countenances were indicative of deep disgust.

"Three, one canot. Too much," said François, the Montagnais whom Fenton had first engaged.

"I take you—I——" said the other, and then he said something in Indian to his companion.

After a deal of talk the matter was finally arranged, and Madge and Horace settled themselves in the bottom of the canoe, with an Indian at bow and stern of their frail bark.

It shot out over the still waters of the lake among the many islands that cluster about the Grande Décharge.

In the pools some of their fellow-guests of the night before were casting the fly for the ouananiche. They passed the Remous de la Vâche Caille, pools where the churned froth from the rapids stands in curdled creamy clots on the dark water.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Good luck to you," shouted their fellow-diner, whipping his fly line into the froth of the Remou.

They looked back to see an ouananiche glistening in its momentary spring, five feet above his taut-held line.

Excitement and suspense were in the air.

They involuntarily dropped their voices to a whisper, and Madge grasped her husband's hand.

François and Pierrot, their two Indians, knelt like posts at either end of the canoe, their paddles keeping time with each other in strong dip and turn.

Now they heard the roar of the rapids where the lake pours out down its steep incline into the swirl and spume of the river.

Madge tightened her grasp of Horace's hand.

"Do you hear it?" she whispered.

She caught her breath with the anguish of intense anticipation.

Pierrot, in the stern, looked for a moment backwards at his comrade, who paddled with his face down-stream. They knelt back to back. His mouth was set like a vise, and the perspiration stood in beads on his upper lip.

BLOWS A FAIR WIND

He was facing up-stream again in an instant, but the canoe had rocked a little with the slight twist of his body in turning.

"Le diable!" muttered François in the prow, his broad shoulder and back immovable as if made of wood.

Now the dark tide carried them more swiftly, and Madge could see ahead the white grinning of the rapids as they snarled among rocks and shallows.

She saw how much depended on the skill and steadiness of the canotiers. An instant's hesitation would dash them against the rocks; a wrong turn of the paddle and they would be swerved round and engulfed by the furious current. Keep the prow pointed straight and sure through the one narrow channel, foam and rage though it might, and they would be carried, with terrible speed, but safely, over the rapids, down to where the waters flowed more smoothly between widening shores.

A canoe containing one Indian was following close behind them in their course.

He was a fellow of magnificent build, square-jawed, and holding his head erect as few of the Montagnais do. He handled his canoe like a born voyageur.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Horace watched him, while Madge, sitting opposite, had her eyes painfully dilated, watching the smother of foam into which they seemed about to plunge.

Now they were in it, the thick spray tumbling over them, dashed into their faces, and pouring down their oil-skin coats, as the fragile bark trembled in the fierce current. They were blinded with the fleecy foam that enveloped them.

Madge did not scream when she felt herself seized by the superhuman hand of the whirlpool. She was too terrified for that. Her heart stood still. But a worse sensation was to follow. She did not know till afterward that Pierrot did what every Montagnais shudders even to dream of by the campfire at night—he lost his paddle! Fatal loss! The light canot d'écorce was jerked out of its channel.

"Perdu!" shouted Pierrot, in a terrible voice.

The canoe was held for an instant atop of the furious seethe, poised by a chance equilibrium of currents that contended with each other for possession of the treasure. Madge knew that there had been an accident by the sudden change in the boat's

BLOWS A FAIR WIND

motion. She seemed wrapped about with a foamy veil of rainbow light and tumultuous sound. All conscious thought and memory slipped away from her. She was an unborn soul in a crystal sphere of calm within this circle of wrath. And the unborn soul wondered. That was all.

She could never have guessed how long this crystal moment lasted. The sphere broke and in a kind of dream she saw herself floating out upon the dark smoothness of a wider stream. The rapids were behind them.

They now drew up on the shore. The exhausted Indians flung themselves upon the beach. All their ruddy-copper hue had left them, and they were yellow pale.

Horace took Madge into his arms and held her there. She quivered from head to foot.

She never knew till afterward how it had all happened; how when Pierrot had lost his paddle and the helpless boat was poised across the current, ready to be engulfed, the Indian behind them, quick as lightning, had flung them his paddle, far out down the stream, and the desperate Pierrot had reached for it, picked it up, and straightened

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

the canoe with a few powerful strokes, and so their lives were saved.

And then the brave fellow had leaped clear of his spinning canoe out into the swift-running stream.

There had been fishermen on the shore who watched him as he disappeared from view in the black depths of the water.

How smoothly it seemed to flow, the black water! But the awful depth, and the strength of the current, only the Indian voyageur would know.

Here it was that the young Englishman, Talbot, made his mad venture last year on a reckless bet with his comrades. The smooth stillness of the upper current has a sinister quiet when one reflects on the arms underneath that suck and draw down. He was never seen again. Only a Montagnais Indian, who mended his canoe a hundred miles down on the lower Saguenay, reported afterward that on that same day he saw a white hand up-flung from the river—just that and nothing more.

But on this day, the swimmer's head appeared above the water again, and the desperate battle was waged—man against demon.

BLOWS A FAIR WIND

For long it seemed that he could not withstand, for ever, as he made for the shore, the demon-water pulled him down—down—down-stream. But ever he set his face like a gladiator's and struck for the shore again. So that to the on-lookers he seemed to be motionless, there where his head first appeared above the water.

"Bravo—Bon garçon!" they shouted to him. But the demon-water roared and hissed in his ears and drowned the human cry.

Yes! He moves! He gains the shore—by inches. Nearer and nearer—but the strokes of his arms are feebler, and the forehead and eyes barely show above water. And still the demon is strong and tugs at him.

His senses have grown benumbed. The keen desire for life is dulled. The water roars in his ears.

"What use? Give it up. Down I go—away I go—how good to struggle no more! Let the demon have me——"

Surely, surely he will not fail now. Now, at the last moment, when he is so near the shore. So near—he cannot dream how near—three boat-lengths and they can reach him with the rope.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Some one starts to sing—the chasseur who ran back for a rope. Why should he sing, when a brave man meets his death?

“V’la l’bon vent,
V’la l’ joli vent,
Ma mie m’appelle.”

Very loud and clear it floats out over the water, the old familiar song.

“Blows a fair wind,
Blows a fine wind,
And my love calls me.”

Ah, the swimmer has not gone under! There he is again, and swimming manfully.

“V’la l’bon vent,
V’la l’joli vent,
V’la bon vent,
Ma mie m’attend.”

The American girl in the Scotch Tam o’Shanter, who stands by her ruddy-faced father watching the scene, hides her face on his corduroy coat, and cries.

They are pulling him in now. He has clung to the rope.

“Blows a fair wind,
Blows a fine wind,
Blows a fair wind,
And my love waits for me.”

CHAPTER VII

“AH, AH! CÉCILIA ”

Fenton hunted him up that evening and brought him over to the Island House. The ladies crowded round him with butterfly compliments.

“C'est r'en,” he said, in answer to all, turning his keen eyes and slow smile upon the women. “Je l'ai fait pour m' plaisir.”

Fenton paid him a price for the canoe, which they said was a beautiful one of his own building. It had been swept down the rapids and dashed to pieces like an egg shell on the rocks. He received the money without a demur. His manners were royal in their gravity.

“And your name?” asked Madge, earnestly.

He looked her full in the eyes, as few Montagnais will do. This square look, with the erect carriage of the head, Madge noticed. But he was not a Montagnais, as she learned from his answer.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Poléon Gros-Louys," he answered, "a Huron."

He still looked at Madge, for he liked the gray sincerity of her glance.

"Then you are Yvonne Brusseau's cousin," she exclaimed, "and live at La Jeune Vallette."

"Oui, oui, Madame," he answered, the slow, strong smile again taking possession of his face.

"That is not enough," said Madge to her husband, looking at the bills which Poléon held crushed in his hand. "Our lives are worth more than that."

"What would you like?" said Fenton to Gros-Louys. "Name me anything and you shall have it, if it is within my power."

The Indian did not answer for a minute. He was reading Fenton's face. Then he looked at Madge, and said, speaking French:

"I will take a day or two, and after name what is in my heart, Madame."

For when he was asked to name his desire his first thought had been Yvonne, his Dew-of-the-Morning.

The Fentons took Gros-Louys for guide, and made the week's trip, by forests, streams and portages, from Lake St. John to La

Jeune Vallette. It was a new experience for them both. The primeval woods are a revelation. City-bred people, whose souls are still open to wind and star, are taught by such green, silent days and vaulted nights that half of life has not been understood before, and the other half misunderstood.

When Madge sat on the “gallerie” of Etienne Brusseau’s house, a star-lit, autumn evening, after her arrival, with Yvonne by her side, she was wiser and younger than she had ever been before.

Horace sat on the steps with Etienne and Gros-Louys, smoking and exchanging experiences with them, like the cosmopolitan that he was. Etienne told of the porpoise-fishing, and the loups-marin at Rivière-Ouelle when he was younger. Gros-Louys, slowly, between long whiffs at his pipe, told of the great elk he had shot after two weeks’ hunting alone on the northern ranges of the Laurentides.

Within, from the *cave*, came sounds of tumultuous mirth. “Charle l’Acadien” was there, a vagrant Acadian youth who picked up a precarious living from village to village by the exercise of nimble feet and a nimble tongue. Rat-tat-tat, came the sound

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

of Aimé's broomstick on the floor of the *cave*, while l'Acadien kept time in one of his endless elaborate dances. At each new figure in the dance, shrill peals of laughter ran around the circle of little Brusseaus, within which he whirled. Still the relentless rat-tat-tat went on, the sweat streamed from the l'Acadien's broad, pasty face, the light feet twirled and twisted, the children shrieked, and Madame, sitting by the great wood-filled stove, with her baby-boy in her arms, smiled absently as she crooned:

“Le troisième jour de mai
Que barrai-je à ma mie.”

Father St. Clair came into the yard, finding his way carefully in the darkness among the tall trees.

“Dieu vous bénisse, mes enfants,” he said, as the men rose at the foot of the steps.

He climbed the steep, high steps slowly, and sat down beside Yvonne and Madge.

“So this is the American lady Yvonne has told me of,” the priest said, giving Madge his satiny hand-clasp.

“Bienvenue, Madame.”

He looked at her searchingly. Her face was illumined by the lamplight that shone through from the little parloir. He noted the unworldly mouth, and the child-like gray eyes that were black in that half-light.

"One to be trusted," he thought, "and who has never known sorrow."

"An-na-o-ta-ha," said Gros-Louys from below, in a voice unusually low and tender. "Descend. I would speak with you."

The French-Canadian priest and the American woman talked together all that evening, while the stars waxed and waned in the black spaces of the great sky, and the chill September wind sighed in the tops of the tall pines.

Madge drew her furs about her and led the Abbé along with tactful question and comment. She learned the simple history of La Jeune Vallette; of the fête du rivièrè and the danse dramatique; of the Brusseaus; the Gros-Louys, the Sioüis, and the Tahourenchés; of the First Communion; the masses; the Sisters of Marie-Joseph; the Maison du Roi, where his people had lived for hundreds of years. He even vaguely outlined his own life to her.

"But one must efface one's self," he broke

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

off. "I live in my people and—my books. One need not often think of one's self when one has those, Madame. The Holy Church is my earthly love."

Leaning forward, he smiled sadly into the face of the happy young wife.

She smiled back, wonderingly.

Dear Abbé, if you had won your earthly love, where would the Holy Church have been?

Yvonne and Poléon paced up and down on the short-trodden grass among the oaks and pines.

"An-na-o-ta-ha," said Poléon, "the American Monsieur will do what I wish in return for the *aviron* I sent him. What is your wish, that I may ask it of him?"

Yvonne took Poléon's great hands in her small brown ones, and danced round him.

"Mon père n'avait fille que moi
Encor sur la mère il m'envoie.
Sautez, mignonne, Cécilia,
Ah, ah! Cécilia,
Ah, ah! Cécilia."

She sang this madly, dancing back and forth in front of him as far as the limit of his arms would let her.

“AH, AH! CECILIA”

“Why don’t you answer then, ma mie?” he asked, drawing her up to him with brusque emotion and looking down closely into her little face, vague and pale in the starlight.

“And have I not answered then, big cousin,” she replied, calling him by the name he did not like. She slipped out of the girdle of his arms, but still held him by the fingertips.

“Encor sur la mèr’ il m’ envoie.”

“I want to go with the American Madame, Poléon, far away to her place, and learn what La JeuneVallette will never teach me.”

“And then——?” he said, almost roughly, drawing her up to him again.

“Ah! bah! Je ne sais.” She shrugged her shoulders.

“Then—no. I will ask him some other thing. A big canot d’ècorce for myself, or a beautiful picture of St. Anne for Tante Marie, your mother.”

“You are cruel, Poléon. You torture me. Why did you ask me my wish at all. Great bear, with the big paws! Don’t crush me so!”

“It is you that are cruel, An-na-o-ta-ha,

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

ma mie. To ask for your one wish, to go far away."

"Ah, but you will let me go." She clung to him and smoothed his bronze cheek caressingly:

"One little wish like that for Yvonne."

"And what for Poléon?" he asked.

"I will love you," she breathed.

"Mignonne!"

His strong arms enfolded her again.

"And marry me?"

The young girl cast a long look forward into the future.

"When I return to La Jeune Vallette," she said, simply.

In this manner was Yvonne's promise made.

In a few days more arrangements were completed between the Fentons and Brusseaus. The expense of Yvonne's education was to be borne by her parents and by Poléon, who always aided the family of his aunt, so called, with whom he had always lived.

Madge left it in this way for the sake of their self-respect, though she anticipated that the cultivation of this whim of hers would draw upon her own resources.

At last they were on the deck of the Montreal steamer. Yvonne, dressed as a Vallette Huronne had never before been, stood, pale, flashing-eyed, till Poléon and her mother left the steamer. With a sigh of relief she turned away toward Point Lévis, while her kinspeople still waved adieu to her from the pier. In the mind of that untutored child the wildest tumult had arisen. No bourgeois dreams of happiness floated before her: a fine house like those she had just seen that morning on the St. Louis road; clothes such as the ladies wore who drove out to see the Falls in the swaying, white-cushioned calèches; rings like those in the windows along the Rue Fabrique. Of such stuff was not the vision that floated before Yvonne. It was something indefinable, but without it life was empty.

She stood on the deck till the boat had steamed past the promontory and citadel, past Wolfe's Cave, and the long, low curves of Sillery, past Cap Rouge, and had left behind all that might have been familiar to her. Then she turned to Madge Fenton, who sat in a camp-chair watching her.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"I am ver' bad," she cried, impulsively.
"Already I forget myself of my friens an'
not say for zem au revoir. It ees for I am
raveesh' by wan dream."

PART THREE



OPEN WINGS

“Thirst for the unknown, passionate love of life.”
—*Amiel's Journal.*

CHAPTER I

THE WINNING-OUT OF WILLOUGHBY

Willoughby was in the midst of his first campaign. Every honorable means had been employed since his nomination to make his election sure. Yet machine influence is too insidious to be circumvented by any but the most experienced politician. Could he rely upon the people for his support without the aid of the leaders? This question was on his mind as he prepared for his evening's work on the platform.

He was on the point of setting out for the Independent meeting when a card was brought to him. Willoughby was surprised. Compromise? Could it be that this man recognized the strength of the new movement? The great man entered. "Tommy" was a man of few words, and came at once to the point.

"Willoughby," he said, "I want to make a deal with you. I've watched your campaign so far, and know pretty well the pull you have with this reform push. But let me

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

tell you right here, you can't drive that man McIlhaney out of the council. You've got a strong pull on the whitewashers, but they haven't got the stuff to put up. Let me tell you right here, it'll take hard cash and lots of it to turn down Jim McIlhaney."

Tommy bit the end off his cigar viciously, and cast a knowing look across the table at Willoughby:—

"See?"

Willoughby did "see," but said nothing. Then Tommy continued, laying before Willoughby the scheme by which the latter's campaign might be won, and no harm to any one. Tommy, having had his say, rose, planting his feet widely apart, and thrust his thick, beringed hands into his trousers-pockets. He looked at Willoughby, waiting for an answer.

Willoughby was perplexed. Here, he knew, was a certain method of winning out. As the prospect of his election by aid of the gang arose in his mind, his doubt increased as to his ability to win without their aid. Of course, he was playing into the hands of a bad man, for that "Tommy" had some private ends to be served, Willoughby was certain. But as far as he knew, the New City

THE WINNING-OUT OF WILLOUGHBY

proposition was a good one, and would benefit the working people back of the yards. If Jim McIlhaney won out, the proposition would fall through, and there would be one boodler more on the council—whereas, with him, Willoughby, as alderman from the Fifteenth ward, something, if not much, could be accomplished toward cleansing municipal politics. As a step toward political preferment, Willoughby did not value his victory. Still, the case was not clear.

Upon his return from the campaign meeting, Willoughby found a letter on his desk with the pinkish Canadian stamp upon it. He sank into an easy-chair and put his feet up on the railing of the corpulent black-bellied stove that in winter heated their plebeian chambers. Pfeffer, his fellow socialist, was sleeping heavily in the other room.

Willoughby knew that the letter was from Yvonne Brusseau. He held it in his hand and thought. His love for her had come at a transitional time in his character. Many of the fluctuating currents of his life had since then set in an opposite direction from that towards which they had formerly

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

tended. But through them all, like the steady stream that swings below the ocean-tides, had flowed his devotion for Yvonne. In her, he had found, or dreamed that he found, the ideal love of his heart. He knew that she had not pledged herself to him, but curiously enough, he felt himself pledged to her. Modern exigencies, inexplicable to the French-Huron girl, had kept him from her, had kept her from believing in the truth of his love. If it were not for this, he thought, she would unhesitatingly have given him her promise. He wrote her letters full of affection, but did not blame her that her answers were uncertain in tone. Dear little Yvonne! How could she understand? He was thankful to have her answers at all, and only prayed that no impetuous lover might carry her off before he could find it possible to claim her as his wife. *Wife*—— Now, with the unopened letter in his hand, he questioned himself. Would he find her the same, would he feel the same, as he had found her, as he had felt—in the maple-wood by the St. Gabriel? He tried to imagine her as head of some modest ménage on—no, not in this dingy quarter; away from here, on a shady side street, with little squares of

green grass and lilac-bushes in the front yards, where white-capped maids open the doors when the electric bell rings. Yes! He could call up the picture—she would be very dainty and piquant—sitting there at the head of the table, behind the silver coffee-urn. She would be in scarlet—he always liked her in that scarlet cotton gown. Her black hair and little white teeth when she dimpled and smiled, and the satiny touch of her small fingers,—her quaint foreign English, with its sweet, lisping inflections—he could almost hear it now, her “*Monsieur Villeaubille*.”

Willoughby's eyes were closed. The ugly, corpulent stove and Mr. Thomas Rossiter's printed card were forgotten. Again the wind sighed in the fir-trees, and the St. Gabriel, far down below in its narrow bed, boomed sleepily like dreaming thunder.

Yes, he would have old Otto over to spend the evening—Otto—with his preposterous attitudes and bristling pompadour of sandy hair. He would sit and pound the table and talk Carl Marx at them, while he and Yvonne—ah—yes—he and Yvonne——

Otto Pfeffer's heavy snoring in the other room awoke him from his reverie.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

There stood the corpulent stove, and Mr. Thomas Rossiter's name stared down at him where Otto had stuck it with its edge under the woodwork of one of the door panels.

"Rēx mortuus est. Vivāt Rēx," Pfeffer had written under it in great black scrawls.

Waltz music began to strike up from Schumacher's Hall behind the saloon on the corner. He could just hear the push of the dancers' feet upon the floor.

He opened the Canadian letter. It was dated:

La Jeune Vallette.

Dear Monsieur Willoughby:

You are kind still to had thought of me, though it is long time that I do not see you. Petit Hilaire he grow one big little boy and very good. Ernestine was at the Convent de Marie-Joseph. She grow very nice little girl, with so yellow hair like *papan* Etienne.

I want ask you not to think of Yvonne no more. I say one time I like you very much, but that so long time ago and you been gone. I read one nice book with the dear Abbé every mornings. It is English—

I had not thought of you now any more.

[Oh, Yvonne!]

I don' know what I do to-morrow year. Maybe I go way to Montréal and be Gray Sister.

THE WINNING-OUT OF WILLOUGHBY

So I write you my adieu. You will not care of not hearing of Yvonne.

Votre amie du temps jadis,
Yvonne Brusseau.

My maman wishes me to have my cousin in marriage—Poléon demand me now this many a times——

Pierce could not help but smile at the naive little postscript, but he folded the letter tenderly and put it back into its envelope.

Dear little Yvonne! He must seek her at once. Things might take care of themselves. Let his bank-account go hang. He would manage for them both, somehow. The "modest ménage" dwindled to a three-room flat. That letter was imperative. Delay might be fatal. *His* Yvonne married to another, to Poléon Gros-Louys!

He pushed his chair back noisily, and walked up and down between the green-calcimined walls of the dimly-lighted room.

"Himmel!" muttered Otto Pfeffer, turning over uneasily in his sleep, "what are you up to, old man?"

Willoughby's eyes fell on Rossiter's card and on the Evening News which lay on his

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

desk, open at Jim McIlhaney's speech in Ashfield Hall.

That campaign! His nomination! The dishonest alderman against whom he was running! The election on which so much depended! These rushed into his mind. Could he run away from his campaign? Could he desert the cause he was enlisted to support? Now, above all, when the city boss had almost thrust victory into his hands!

Willoughby stood stock-still in the center of the room. His mental and his physical attitude exactly corresponded. He was at a dead stand. Two conflicting emotions within his breast had locked arms and were motionless. Full five minutes he stood thus. Then he sat down and wrote to Yvonne a letter of fervent asseveration, of reluctant delaying, of manly pleading.

Hastily he sealed it. The morning light was already showing in the gray sky above the low roofs and sheds that stretched away below his back window.

The gas-light still shone from the oval windows in Schumacher's Hall, whence came the languishing strains of the Home, Sweet Home waltz and the tired tread of the

THE WINNING-OUT OF WILLOUGHBY

last dancers' feet. Willoughby seized his hat and went out into the street to mail his letter at the corner box.

The early workmen were already filing down Libby Avenue into the Yards. A somber procession of toil, with their discolored clothes, stolid faces and swinging dinner-pails.

By the saloon Willoughby bought a morning paper of a newsboy. His eye caught this heading:

"McIlhaney Turned Down.
Rossiter and McIlhaney Disagree."

Further down he read:

"It is rumored that Pierce Willoughby, the Fifteenth Ward candidate, is to be given a place on the Republican ticket. The party leaders admit the strength of the reform movement. It is thought that Willoughby's name will strengthen the whole ticket. There is no doubt that this new move will insure the election of the young reform leader. The Independents are congratulating themselves upon the prospective success of their nominee."

The nomination had thus been thrust upon Willoughby before he had decided the ethics of the matter. Thereupon he decided not

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

to decide it, but let the circumstance be his guide.

Now he and Otto were having it back and forth in one of their most fervid discussions. In such discussions Otto was always the Mountain and Pierce the Plain. Valentino, their Italian neighbor and co-worker, fervidly listened.

"The trouble is just here," said Otto, knocking the ashes from his pipe upon the table, "you're sailing under the colors of a rotten machine—Gott in Himmel! What's the matter?" as he was interrupted by laughter from the Plain.

"That's all right," said Willoughby, "we won't mind mixed metaphors."

"Now you are going in as Rossiter's man, and the mass of the people won't know what your dashed exalted reform-purposes are, will they? Bless them! not they! And they won't care, not a whit. They vote for you because you're run by the party leaders. So the people aren't educated up to it as they ought to be by a landslide of votes in favor of clean politics. You throw all that away by this gol-darned compromise of yours."

Otto was glaring at the heap of ashes on

THE WINNING-OUT OF WILLOUGHBY

the table. His big, honest cheeks were flushed under his light, straggling whiskers. Valentino thrust his thin, nervous fingers through his black, longish hair. He admired Pfeffer. He loved Willoughby, but thought that Pfeffer was in the right.

"His voice is vehement, friend Willoughby," Valentino said, "but his eyes see clearly."

"As I was saying," Pfeffer went on, not minding the interruption, "that's donkeyism number one. What we want is not so much votes as opinions, and then you're not going to get without a fight. It's the fight we want. Without it, victory is a sham.

"Second, not only will this agitation in favor of the Independent movement be lost, but a lot of folks will believe you've made a deal of some kind, and you can't harry them out of the belief. So you'll not only spoil the chance of adding to our side, you'll subtract some who aren't over-confident now of any one's honesty. That's donkeyism number two——"

"There's only one more thing to be said," added Willoughby, quietly, "which is, that I have made a deal and the boodlers are going to profit by it——"

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Diablenento!" exclaimed Valentino.
"No one but yourself should say that of you."

"But I was coming to it," said Otto.
"That would be donkeyism number three."

"Do you believe it?" asked Willoughby.

"I believe in the 'ugly central fact of donkeyism,' " replied Otto, "but I believe you'll kick clear of it, my boy."

There was silence in the room for several minutes, while Otto smoked, Pierce thought, and Valentino shifted his long legs uneasily, looking from one to the other.

"What did you say?" asked Otto.

"I did not say."

"I want you to."

"You know just my position, Pfeffer. I am running for honest administration. I shall tell the people so. I go in with clean hands. Let the people suspect me if they will. Better men have been suspected before. It's wiser to fight in the council than to fight to get in and fail."

"You're obdurate, then, I see," said Otto, bluntly. "Good-night."

"What! You're not going with me to Ashfield Hall to hear my speech?"

THE WINNING-OUT OF WILLOUGHBY

"Tönnér and blitzen, no! I'm going to turn in early."

"And you?" asked Willoughby.

"I shall be there," said the Italian.

Rossiter was to come for Willoughby at half-past seven to take him over to the hall where he was to make his speech, calling down the Democratic candidate for the same office and extolling the purity of his own intentions. But the speech was not to be what Rossiter expected, nor, indeed, what Willoughby himself had planned when they started out together in a cab for Ashfield Hall.

"Rossiter," said Willoughby, as they neared the hall, "I'm not quite clear on this New City scheme that you say will come up in the committee——"

"Well, you know McIlhaney is dead against it."

"Yes."

"And we're for it."

Willoughby recoiled at the "we," and said: "That's not so sure, is it?"

"Why not?"

"I must know more of it, first."

This was the time that Rossiter overreached himself. The corporation attor-

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

ney's comment on the sameness of human nature came to his mind.

"He wants to see the color of his pay," Rossiter thought, and so he lighted the fuse which set on fire the powder that later burst the bomb-shell of that memorable evening.

"You can trust Elkins," said Rossiter. "I'll have a cool thousand from him, and as for your share of the chink, why, Tommy Rossiter's word is as good as gold, any day."

"Do you think, sir," retorted Willoughby, in a blaze, "that I am in this thing for the boodle? Am I the man to blackmail corporations or block public enterprises——"

Willoughby's voice had risen in his heat, but the cab had stopped before Ashfield Hall.

The city boss was getting out, with a smile upon his lips at the new candidate's "dramatics."

Ashfield Hall was filled to the utmost, and the air was blue with smoke. It was largely an assembly of laboring men, Germans, Irish, Poles and Bohemians mixed. Some few "tough-nuts" and loafers stood in the passage-way and by the door. They were largely McIlhaney's "boys," who had

THE WINNING-OUT OF WILLOUGHBY

come to make trouble for the green speaker. In front, occupying chairs, were the Independents from the eastern side of the ward, thinking men of integrity who had been culled from the ranks of both parties. The majority of the audience were stupidly staunch Republicans, who had been obedient henchmen of Tommy's and of his ward-heeler for years.

They were mostly Yards laborers, scrapers, cutters, ribbers, packers, shacklers, with an assortment of that rougher class who handled the knives on the "Beds." There were also bosses from the different departments and artisans and shop-keepers, whose wares were displayed within and without the shops with the queer foreign signs that lined the avenue.

Willoughby was introduced by Mr. Thomas Rossiter's flowing periods, as "the man of the future, the exponent of the triumphant new Republicanism." Reference was made to the Monitor's successful fight against a certain infamous bill, to the Park Commission on which Willoughby had served and through which had been obtained Sobieski Park, in the New City neighborhood, and to a Relief Bureau which Willoughby had

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

organized under the auspices of the Monitor, and which had helped many during the hard times the preceding winter. Every one of these apt allusions was met by a vigorous round of applause.

After such an auspicious introduction, the young politician stepped forward on the platform. His old speech he had utterly discarded, and his new speech was seething inarticulately within him. It would make a great difference whether that speech were reported subjectively or objectively. It was one speech that Willoughby thought he made and another that the people heard. But all were agreed that it was the most peculiar campaign utterance that ever went out from Ashfield Hall.

Whether it was the medieval look of vas-salage on the faces before him or Otto's "donkeyism" still ringing in his ears, Pierce could think of nothing but Giordano Bruno's symbolism of the ass.

Whimsically enough, the first words that surged to his lips were these:

"Of two sorts are the bipeds—superior and divine, inferior and vulgar. . . . Of two kinds are the asses—domestic and savage—"

THE WINNING-OUT OF WILLOUGHBY

Looking down at the astonished herd before him, he barely saved himself from this and then suddenly saw his own image, a leader of them, there on the platform, and divinely stupid. Again out of the confusion of his mind, these words arose:

"The whole animal kingdom is governed by the ass, on whom the gods have conferred preëminence and a post in the poop."

It was scarcely an appreciable minute, however, before he commenced speaking, and every eye was riveted upon his hard-set face, with its glittering blue eyes and cynically-smiling mouth.

"Fellow-citizens," he said, "I stand here before you as a renegade—"

"What kind o' brigade is that?" shouted a voice in the rear.

"It's the brigade we all belong to who don't live up to our convictions."

"If it's convictions you're talking about, I'm not in it," said the man, with meaningless smartness.

"Shut up! Give the feller a chance," added another of McIlhaney's boys.

But Willoughby's voice bore down these last two comments as he went on:

"Not as an exponent of Republicanism,

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

new or old, triumphant or defeated, do I stand here. In city politics, I am not Republican, no, and shame be it to me that I must say it in so public a place and in this public way—I will not serve under the Republican machine—”

There was breathless silence when a young fellow by the door with a cigar in his mouth and a derby hat over one ear, called out: “He’s got a jag on. Turn him out.”

“I withdraw. I wish I could find words strong enough to express my scorn for the machine methods and machine motives, which have been revealed to me this evening more clearly than ever before. Citizens of the New City, I reprobate myself that for one moment I dreamed that reform could result from compromise. I repudiate my nomination.”

Here his voice was drowned by mingled roars and hisses from the central mass of Republicans, who began to realize the significance of his words.

“I demand a right to be heard—” thundered Willoughby, and above the storm of voices his voice predominated and won him a respite.

“I withdraw, I have said, from the Repub-

THE WINNING-OUT OF WILLOUGHBY

lican gang ticket, but not from the field. I am here to stay. I am here to fight."

Willoughby, squaring his shoulders against the turbulent crowd, looked every inch a fighter. He had lost that hesitation which marked his first utterances. Opposition and scorn had roused the animal in him.

"I made a mistake. I have admitted it. I am back again under the old standard to fight for the same cause which I falsely supposed could be served under the enemy's ensign. Fellow citizens, I summon you here to rally around me—all who want an honest administration, who want clean streets, who want their own pockets replenished by the results of their own enterprise, who want compensation for the franchises they bestow, who want service from the great corporations without the cost of blackmail laid upon their own shoulders. That is what this man here, who is your leader, would have done. If I had gone into the council under his patronage, his purse would have jingled with gold."

Willoughby's voice went on, drowning the cries of "Prove it! Prove it!" that interrupted him here. He continued speaking of the value of an educational campaign, of

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

the necessity of a party behind the Independent movement. He exposed the corruption of the council, the greed of the aldermen, the soullessness of certain companies, in scathing terms. He held his audience by the fierce magnetism of his personality and the sheer brute force of his words.

But when he ceased speaking, the spell was loosed and the assemblage broke up into the wildest uproar. The Independents rallied round him and forced their way out of the hall.

Otto Pfeffer, who was there, of course, during the whole meeting, seized one arm and Valentino the other. They hurried off together to the quiet, monotonous street.

"He's a talker all right," said the saloon-keeper, who had shouted "Turn-coat."

"But he's squashed himself at the polls, sure enough. What a d——d fool!"

"Otto," said Willoughby humbly, as the two stumbled round in their dark rooms, "am I a donkey?"

"No," roared Otto, with unnecessary vehemence, "you're not the ass at the poop, you're a man."

CHAPTER II

ORCHARDHURST

The haze-empurpled air of autumn hung like a visible revery over the orchard slopes. The faint fragrance of burning grass on a near-by hill gave a cooked tang to the atmosphere. Through the long mellow spaces of the afternoon came the cheery voices of apple-pickers on their ladders among the trees and the occasional rich drumbling of the apples, poured from the baskets into the barrels.

Dr. Van Eyck, like a long-bearded tutelary genius of apple-harvest, sat on an overturned barrel in the lane, alternately puzzling out lines of a sonnet-acrostic and bellowing directions to his men. It was almost time for Brockton to return with the mail. Mail time for Dr. Van Eyck was the pivotal point of the day. Not that he was a man of affairs, for except in his own estimation he was the lord of unlimited leisure, being a retired physician, and having no cares in life but a small orchard and a large, self-

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

inflicted correspondence. But to what person engaged in extensive sonneteering and having at his command a sufficient number of stamps for "submission," would not mail time be the pivotal point of the day? Besides the latent possibilities of eager editorial acceptance in every unopened lot of letters, there were six weekly religious papers coming in, a medical journal, and proofs of scientific pamphlets, privately put forth from time to time.

"Hi there, Cordey, turn those pippins in more gently." The doctor interrupted himself in mid-line. "You're bruising them, man. And pick out a bushel of the finest russets to send over to Mrs. Wilmot's."

The barrels beneath the trees were beginning to round up with glistening green-cheeked apples.

Brockton sauntered down the hilly road to the house. The road wound between old-fashioned shrubbery, weigelas, smoke-bushes, lilacs. He was espied from afar by his father.

"Bring them here," he shouted, with the superb confidence of one who has never been disappointed by post-office returns.

His voice, in volume and ferocity, was out

ORCHARDHURST

of all proportion to its intent, having oftentimes a most salutary effect upon careless apple pickers. Even stolid Draper, the almost stone-deaf, bent old gardener had been known to quiver an eyelash at one terrific admonition of the doctor's.

Brockton sauntered across the over-long grass of the lawn. Brockton always sauntered. More especially if all about him were flurried and hurried did his attitude assume an elegant lassitude. You would misjudge him if you deemed this due to perversity. It sprang from a large-minded desire to counteract evil tendency in others.

"Only one letter, father," the young man smiled, "and that from Madge."

He strolled off through the trees toward the grape-trellis that on a southern slope hung heavy with dark blue fruit. Immaculately groomed and tailored as he was, with his clean-shaven, indifferent face and listless walk, he was quite out of keeping with the hearty old country place, with its air of bounteous good comradeship and unconventional ease.

He was the inexplicable member of the Van Eyck family. He inherited neither the teeming if somewhat bespent energy of his

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

father nor the graceful and unobtrusive activity of his mother. Unlike his sister Helen, who seemed a delicate embodiment of conscience, so carefully were thought and deed in her adjusted to the requirements of equity, Brockton scorned the idea that right and wrong should enter into a man's calculations. It was beneath him entirely to weigh life in the balance. His wishes were their own justification.

Since college, he had been able to find no calling nicely suited to his particular line of ability. He had finally, as it was supposed, settled down to a life of gifted irresponsibility. This was the general belief, though the young man himself had never been known to make a definite statement on the subject. Definite statements were also among the details that dignity forbade. From time to time he made brief trips to New York, where he was supposed by his father to be visiting his college friends and by those friends to be transacting important business for his father.

His sister Madge, who was living in town, saw little of him at these times, and was not quite gratified with the little that she did see. She was keener to observe in

ORCHARDHURST

him the traces of dissipation than his confiding parents or the blameless Helen.

Needless to say, Brockton Van Eyck was lightly esteemed by the good dames and burghers of his own little Dutch village among the hills.

Spuyten Kill mingled the characteristics of suburb, country village and resort, and only with its residents in the last capacity did Brockton care to affiliate himself. But as he did not keep a saddle horse nor a kennel of dogs the young men failed entirely to understand him; and as he had never disturbed himself in gallantries the maidens looked upon him with pale interest. Madge had been the saving member of this family; when she had been Miss Van Eyck, friendly with the burg, cordial with the suburb and chatty with the fashionables from town. No wonder that she had married, in the normal way, and as Mrs. Fenton, was a recognized leader in certain New York circles.

Helen Van Eyck, a girl of eighteen, haughtily timid and little understood, now more alone than ever, found the long country year full of golden quiet, among her books at Orchardhurst.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Gathered at the tea-table that evening, with the western sun flickering through the wistaria and woodbine, and touching here and there the china and glass, the family were listening to Madge's letter, which had been prefaced by Dr. Van Eyck's—

"A most remarkable document from our daughter Madge."

Interested silence followed its conclusion. Dr. Van Eyck, out of respect to his sex, had the habit of deferring first to his son in family discussions.

"Well, Brockton?" he inquired.

"The olives, Eliza," said the young man, and this more important matter having been disposed of, Brockton proceeded.

"Most absurd. That we should receive an untutored savage into the bosom of our family! And for an indefinite time! If she doesn't weary of us before we do of her, we shall be harried into our graves before Christmas."

"Cornelia?"

Dr. Van Eyck, who loved a lengthy and well-ordered domestic conference, had turned to his wife.

Mrs. Van Eyck was a woman of decided convictions, but gentle of speech.

ORCHARDHURST

"I want to hear what you and Helen have to say," she replied.

"As for me," the doctor began, "it will be a heavy addition to my burden of responsibilities, but Madge describes the child as interesting and rarely intelligent. Her education, even in the English language, will be no slight task, and as for her training in domestic and social felicities, Helen would, no doubt, find that within her sphere of duty. The girl will, of course, gain a great deal besides the direct instruction."

"Ah, the incomparable atmosphere! What will she not absorb!" drawled Brockton.

"Then we are to turn her out," the doctor went on, "educated, civilized and an ornament to society. I think it will be a valuable experiment."

"Well put," said Brockton. "The experiments of fools are of value to the wise."

It was Helen's turn. Eagerly she pleaded for Yvonne Brusseau. Something in the novelty of the idea and in her sister's description of the girl's fresh, simple nature appealed to her. Helen's rare enthusiasms were oftenest for causes other than her own.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Helen and Pocohontas!" laughed Brockton, "what a delicious contrast it will be!"

"And now, Cornelia?"

"It will certainly be a serious responsibility," said the wife, knowing well on whose shoulders the responsibility would fall. "But Madge says the girl has great possibilities and is unhappy where she is. It would be cruel to put her under the restraint of a boarding-school, and she would certainly have opportunity for a somewhat free and natural development with us. It seems an opportunity for good which we should not refuse. And, by the way, when did Madge say she was coming out? Wednesday? Why, that is this evening."

"And there they are now," cried Helen, hearing the sound of carriage wheels on the gravel road beneath the window.

"Bravo for the new régime," said Brockton, smilingly, under his breath.

He sprang to unfasten the glass doors opening on the porch and took his mother's arm over the threshold, as they all hastened out to meet the new arrivals.

But mockery and philosophy alike were confuted by Yvonne's presence. She might have been any little black-eyed French-

ORCHARDHURST

Canadian girl, in ordinary attire, rather than the *petite sauvagesse* they had pictured her. Helen and her mother, however, welcomed the disillusionment. Yvonne, shyly silent and reserved, was spectator more than participant of the first gathering and made many reflections of which her face gave small sign.

Madge filled the room with a breeze of conversation and laughter till finally it was bed-time.

It was not more than a week after this that Yvonne, fully ensconced at Orchardhurst, was presented by the doctor with a sonnet-acrostic, beginning:

“Yclad in native charms, th’ ingenuous maid.”

What follows is part of a letter which Yvonne wrote to her mother after she had been a few months at Orchardhurst:

Chère Maman,

Here one has to walk many *arpents* to reach a wood and when one is in the wood it is only a few minutes before one sees light through the trees and it is the open again. I walk with Monsieur the Doctor. He pulls the petals of the flowers apart and makes me to look at them through a glass and gives every bit a long name in Latin.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Monsieur le Curé would understand the Latin, but it is not agreeable for a girl to say such long words.

Monsieur is a good man, but he writes something they call a sonnet. It is necessary that it be of a certain length and it is oftentimes about a person. It is a very curious thing, very difficult to write and also to read understandingly. He has written one for me because he can begin the lines with the letters of my name, for there are just fourteen letters in Yvonne Brusseau. Monsieur is very glad when he knows a name fourteen letters long.

No more of this, for it is something I do not well understand.

Monsieur Brockton is idle all day, doing different things but nothing with his hands. He takes pictures of trees and sometimes of me. He likes to have me accompany him when he goes with his camera. He says I have an artist's eye. An artist's eye is not to like a red brick mansion on a high hill with little fir and cedar trees cut and twisted till they resemble a bad dream. For there is a place like this here, chère Maman, which a rich man built because he wished that the people should know the money he had. This is horrible. An artist's eye is to like a stone wall when it is tumbling down and a scarlet woodbine is creeping over it, also the inside of a dark wood when it is midday and tall flowers stand like white candles in the shadows. Monsieur Brockton and I have

ORCHARDHURST

found a wood like that. At the summit is an old tower which one built long ago for the view. One can climb to the top and see the river which is wide and blue, beautiful almost as the St. Laurent, and the tops of the trees in the village below and the white roofs of houses.

There is hunting here, but not such as Poléon finds on la Montagne Ronde and in the Restigouche forests.

The young men buy a fox and drive him off into the fields. Then they dress themselves in scarlet and go on horses after him. This is called a Hunting Club. Monsieur Brockton does not care to hunt. He likes best to sit and talk, sometimes even with me. His hands are very white, like a priest's. When he smiles his face is pleasant. Tell Poléon that I do not much like Monsieur Brockton. I like a man who is strong and has brown hands and does not look strangely at you.

His sister Helen I love much. She has the good heart and eyes of truth. We read books together and are like sisters. I can speak the English *trés bien*, she says.

Madame the mother is perfect in all respects, and amiable to me as if I were her daughter. Madame Fenton comes out often and I tell her all things.

We have silver forks at table and many plates to eat from. A woman cooks in the kitchen and another stands behind us to hand us the dishes. The crumbs must be

THE LADY OF THE FLAG - FLOWERS

removed between dinner and fruit, and one must sit very straight with folded hands and not assist. It is often irksome.

I study many hours and learn out of books.

When I long for you, chère Maman, and for petit Hilaire and all the little ones, I run away over the hill and walk up and down alone, talking to you in our own dear French. There is a lonely lane by the tower-wood where I go. I take off my hat and sit on a stone and call aloud, and there is one pine tree which is a friend to me.

If one should see me he would wonder at la petite sauvagesse, for here people do not run with the little wild animals alone on hill-sides nor spend all the day with the birds by the river swamp, but they go walking by twos for an hour with parasols to keep the sun from their cheeks.

And when they hear a bird sing, they go home and hunt it down in a book so as to know by what name to name it.

No, Maman, I do not see Monsieur Wiloughby, nor do I write to him. He does not know where I am and I am glad. I have learned a sonnet of Monsieur the Doctor, and often I say it to him for his delight. He likes me to say poems, more particularly when he has written them.

There are many books in the house, as if it were the Curé's, and we must walk lightly on the floors and when visitors come we ask them to play the piano and to sing.

ORCHARDHURST

All is different, and it often wearies me, but I am happy, for I am in the world and not in La Jeune Vallette.

One cannot live forever in Vallette. There are things beyond which I am beginning to see.

CHAPTER III

FIRST TIMES

There were a great many First Times in Yvonne's experience. She did not grow up to them as most young girls do, but they fell upon her out of the skies.

There had been the First Party, the First Play and the First Shopping-Tour. On these occasions she observed with outward passivity the genus, modern society. Her gravity was adjudged due to her lack of fluent English. In reality, it was the speechlessness that accompanies a flood of new impressions. If there was one social knack Yvonne possessed, it was that of maintaining silence. Her silences were neither *bête* nor *gauche*. They were expressive and even interesting.

The Indians are inveterate gamblers. Yvonne handled life as a card-player plays a new game. She was slow to show her hand and quick to follow a lead. She reserved her trump cards for the last.

By virtue of these gifts or intuitions, she

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

saved herself from any glaring blunders. She learned early that to do as other people do, is the Golden Rule of society.

To be sure, she had sometimes shown amazement over things at which one is supposed to conceal amazement, such as, shop windows, polite lies, and décolleté gowns. She had commenced answering in good faith a social fusillade of questions not meant to be answered. She had been on several occasions conspicuously silent when things were discussed concerning which she was ignorant. Things of which society is ignorant she kept to herself.

Tissette and Poléon would not harmonize with Brockton nor Helen Van Eyck. The danse dramatique and the fête du rivièrè would not find a proper setting in Spuyten Kill or Riverside Drive. The Herb-gatherers' Village and Broadway were too far apart.

Whether she lived at all in the old life, or longed for it, the Van Eycks never knew. There were the weekly letters to maman, and others, not so frequent, to Poléon, to both of which there came infrequent replies. There were occasional little gifts sent to Tissette or Aimé, or petit Hilaire. These

FIRST TIMES

were the only visible signs that the French-Huron girl remembered the home of her race. Of the village and the people she would never speak.

It was Yvonne's second winter and there came another of her First Times. Mrs. Fenton was giving a tea, and Yvonne was invited. She wore a Spanish costume, with rings in her ears, and her brown arms bare. Mrs. Fenton had dressed her so, for she was to read from the Spanish Gypsy.

She made a striking figure, of course, and her "reading" was one of the "features" of the afternoon.

"I'm sure I've seen you before, Miss Brusseau," drawled a blond young man. He had just been introduced to her, at his own request, by Helen Van Eyck.

"Weren't you at the Castelmari salons in Paris last winter?"

"I was never in Paris," said Yvonne, with her precise English, "and I am sure you have never seen me before."

The young man gave her a second look of genuine surprise. He was shocked at her literalness.

"I shall see you to-morrow night, I hope," he continued, rather aimlessly.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Where?" said Yvonne.

But the blond young man was talking to a girl in a Gainsborough hat, and now he and the hat were edging towards the tea-room together.

"It was the Coddingtons' ball to-morrow night he meant," said Helen Van Eyck's quiet voice beside Yvonne.

"Almost every one is going. He was trying to place you."

"And Paris?" questioned Yvonne, with the eager smile of a learner.

"He wondered where you got your French accent."

"You were delicious, my dear," said a large lady in black satin, to whom Yvonne had been introduced ten minutes before.

"How do you do it?"

"I do—what?" said Yvonne.

The large lady had laid her hand upon Yvonne's arm and was pushing past her with this bit of patronage, but was stopped by Yvonne's blunt rejoinder.

"Quite ignorant, poor thing!" she said to herself. "I suppose she is paid."

"Why, the accent and the—phrasing—and all that. It's so good—so foreign, you know.

Don't you think so, Miss Van Eyck? Yes, Colonel Dennery, I'm with you."

This to a tall man with military mustaches who had turned to look for her. Then she, too, was en route for the tea-room.

"She didn't stay long enough to find out your nationality," said Helen. "That was what she was after. It's Mrs. Cornelius Higgins. She's always on the lookout for celebrities."

"Don't you love Tschaikowsky?" said a sharp-featured young woman, holding a candied fig between her gloved finger-tips.

She had drifted up beside Yvonne, who still stood in the embrasure where the tide of congratulatory small-talk had left her after her reading.

A bushy-haired young man was at the piano then, but how was Yvonne to know that the lavender-gloved young woman referred to his music and not to the candied fig?

"I never tasted it before," replied Yvonne.

Fortunately her reply was lost in the burst of hand-clapping that succeeded the murmur of voices at the close of the musician's rendition.

"Magnificent, wasn't it?" exclaimed a girl

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

on the window-seat, who had been telling a story vigorously during the music.

"Such technique!" murmured her vis-a-vis, and each took the other quite seriously.

"Let's talk to that fascinating Miss Brusseau. They say she's a great friend of Madge Fenton's."

This from the vigorous talker.

Then, leaning forward, she addressed Yvonne, who stood by the heavy curtain, finding a spectacular interest in the scene around her, made possible by her ignorance and self-possession.

"Herr von Wertheimer interprets Wagner delightfully, don't you think so?"

The girl was not sure that he had been playing Wagner at all, but she had put the question safely.

Yvonne thought a moment before answering. This was unusual, and it made its impression upon the glib society girls.

"Do you mean the music?" asked Yvonne, a bit puzzled, but framing her sentence with care.

"How remarkable!" thought the girl who had addressed her. Then, as Yvonne seemed waiting for an answer, she replied:

FIRST TIMES

"Yes, I did enjoy his rendition of that last theme, didn't you?"

"I really didn't listen to it," said Yvonne, unaware of her uniqueness. "There was so much conversation, one could not hear."

"What a strange young person!" the two girls remarked afterward to Mrs. Cornelius Higgins. "Where does she come from?"

Brockton had stood near Yvonne during this last passage and overheard it.

"I say, Miss Brusseau, you gave those girls some jolly answers. May I sit down on this window seat beside you?"

"They thought me stupid," said Yvonne. "But yes, you may. If they knew how much I had learned in the last two years, they would think so not again."

The crowd in the drawing-room was thinning out now. People had stopped coming and ladies in fluffy wraps were going out. The streets were dark. Carriage numbers were bawled out and the slamming of doors was heard, as the wheels rumbled away with departing guests.

"This is just the nice time," began Brockton boyishly, when a lady who had been saying good-bye to the receiving line came up, holding out her hand.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

She was a tiny body, with a soft, wrinkled little face, framed in youthful curls, and a pair of sharp, bird-like eyes.

Van Eyck muttered something under his breath which the tiny lady would not have liked to hear, and withdrew to a portfolio of foreign views.

"Mrs. Fenton has been telling me what a charming gift you have," the lady was saying, in her modest little voice, scrutinizing Yvonne as keenly as the bird does the worm.

"Indeed, I am so sorry to have missed your delightful reading. I had come from Mrs. Syswick's—. You know Mrs. Syswick?"

"No, I do not know her."

"No? I thought that every one knew her, especially you artistic people. One could see to look at you that you are an artist. Something you picked up on your travels?"

She was fingering the Spanish scarf with a deferential touch, but her glance was inquisitorial.

She had failed to get satisfaction from Mrs. Fenton as to Yvonne's identity, and was now pitting her adroitness, unconscionably, against a young girl's inexperience.

"No, it is Mrs. Fenton's," said Yvonne.

FIRST TIMES

"Ah! Really quite Castilian. You have known Mrs. Fenton a long time, I presume. She tells me you are spending the month with her."

The little lady paused and looked. There was demand in her look. Yvonne ignored it, toying with the fringe of her scarf, eyes downcast.

"I do not speak your English very good," she said sweetly, flashing her black eyes upon the little lady.

It was as if in apology for her scant replies, and yet, very subtly, it had the effect of a dismissal.

The baffled little lady moved away, and Brockton suddenly lost interest in the portfolio and was at Yvonne's side.

"By Jove, that was a good one, though!" he ejaculated. "You turned her down neatly, Yvonne."

Yvonne looked at him gravely and said:

"I did not love that lady. She tried to conquer me with her eyes."

Now, Mrs. Fenton was walking up to them with William Fitz-Simmons, a Younger Son, at her elbow.

"Here comes that British bulldog pup," muttered Brockton in Yvonne's ear.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Aw, this ain't fair at all," said Fitz-Simmons, "you're making yourself the best-hated man in the room, Van Eyck."

His very blond mustache was curled and parted above thick red lips that failed to look anything but juicy.

Yvonne, in surprise, glanced about the nearly-deserted apartments. No one was left in the drawing-room but a lady and gentleman in the doorway who were talking to some departing guests; Mrs. Higgins interviewing the bushy-haired young man at the piano; and two elderly young women from Yonkers who stood waveringly near the supper-room. They were debating whether they should take the next train, or go into the supper-room unescorted.

"It is very kind of Mr. Van Eyck to talk to me when I am left by myself," said Yvonne.

Fitz-Simmons forgot to say anything, so abashed was he by this lack of insincerity.

"Really, aw, that's very good," he said, deciding to take it as a joke.

Then, as Mrs. Fenton made some remark to her brother, he remembered his errand, and said:

"Miss Brusseau, may I take you into the tea-room?"

FIRST TIMES

"She promised to go in with me," exclaimed Van Eyck, dropping a sentence unfinished.

Fitz-Simmons moistened his red lips a little, and looked at Yvonne.

"I did not promise, but I will go with Mr. Van Eyck," said Yvonne serenely.

And she smiled graciously upon the outraged Younger Son.

Nevertheless, it was not long before Fitz-Simmons called at the Fentons'. Yvonne was there, of course, and before he left he had arranged to take her to the St. Botolph Club exhibition.

The afternoon of the exhibit arrived and Yvonne and the Younger Son, in due form, set out together.

Fitz-Simmons was a very young man and a very impecunious one. He had, however, expectations and a family tree. Add to this, a British crudeness, and the belief, into which some gossip had fooled him, that Miss Brusseau was an heiress, and one may understand a state of mind susceptible to Miss Brusseau's naïve charms.

They had been standing for some time in front of a purple landscape when Yvonne said, in her prettily deliberate English:

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Have we not looked at it assez long temps? Let us try that wheatfield in the corner."

"You don't suppose I've been looking at the picture, Miss Brusseau, when you are beside me."

Yvonne's brown cheeks crimsoned.

"Sit down here on the sofa. I want to say something to you."

"I beg of you!" laughed Yvonne, "it is perilous."

"You're the only—" the Younger Son's voice was thick with suppressed eagerness, but changed, as a woman with an hysterical aigretted bonnet took the remaining third of their sofa. She was conning her catalogue, but had one ear open toward the interesting couple, the tall and very fair young man with the aristocratic bearing, and the olive-skinned girl in the otter cape.

"—person I've met who likes that Monet," he finished, coolly.

"One must imagine to like it," answered Yvonne.

"Quite so. I could imagine something else and like that."

The hysterical bonnet had risen, and was moving toward a "Portrait of a Lady."

FIRST TIMES

"Vraiment," said Yvonne, "that meadow with the—what do you call it, la brouillard——"

"Never mind," said Fitz-Simmons, laying his hand on hers behind the shelter of her big muff on the seat between them.

"I must have one little chance. Miss Brusseau, do you—Don't look at that ugly old peasant woman on the wall. Look at me!"

The hysterical bonnet, which must have had remarkable discrimination, was near them again. Its owner was deeply interested in the "French Peasant-Woman."

"I love——"

The lavender bonnet's catalogue fluttered unseasonably to the floor.

The Younger Son started.

"—a good effective woman-annihilator, don't you?"

Yvonne leaned back against the cushion, and laughed softly for a whole minute.

"Mon Dieu!" she moaned, overcome with mirth by the tragedy of his face.

Then they sat silent for some time. Yvonne proposed going into the water-color room, but Fitz-Simmons was sulky and would not stir. So she went by herself, and

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

returning, found him still sitting on the sofa. The tragic look had mitigated.

"Miss Brusseau," he began stiffly, "I wish to avow my feelings—"

Why did that sudden impulse come to Yvonne? She was looking at the "French Peasant-Woman." The impulse came to her, and she acted on it.

"She looks so precisely like my grandmother," said Yvonne. "My grandmother wore a wadded skirt just below her knees. She never had a hat on in her life."

"Wh-wh-what?" exclaimed the Englishman. His grandmother lived in a Hall and wrote on crested paper.

When the passion for disclosure seizes one, it is irresistible.

Yvonne was dimly thinking:

"When I have finished telling him, I will see what he will say."

He looked at her fixedly while she went on:

"My grandfather never slept on a bed. And I—"

"And you?" he repeated automatically.

"—I never wore a pair of gloves till I came to Spuyten Kill."

Yvonne was looking at the man's kid

FIRST TIMES

gloves that lay in glossy propriety beside her muff.

"I never heard of caviare toast before a certain dinner two weeks ago. I—"

The consternation on the Younger Son's face spurred Yvonne to cap the climax.

"I have often danced a war-dance with feathers round my head."

"You're not chaffing me?" he faltered.

"By the tomahawk of my grandfather, I swear it is the truth," said Yvonne solemnly.

"May I ask for an explanation of the riddle?" demanded the young man, whose British pride began to bristle.

"Je suis une sauvagesse," said Yvonne, repressing a laugh with such vigor that her voice trembled impressively.

"My cousin hunts the caribou in the far north. His name is O-dil-o-ro-han-nin."

It was five o'clock and the attendants were ostentatiously putting out lights.

They rose to go. The Englishman's bearing was more than ever patrician as he handed Yvonne into a coupé.

"What was it you began to say—when I interrupted you?" asked Yvonne.

"Nothing worth while, I presume," he answered, with a thankful sobriety. "Your

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

fascinating autobiography has driven it from my head. Really, you have the advantage over us people whose antecedents are so tiresomely — ah — unexceptionable. Yes, drive to Thirty-fifth Street," he said to the coachman, as he closed the door.

CHAPTER IV

MAKERS OF MANNERS

A six-acre place is a little world in itself. Here you may have your wilding nook by a meadow runnel where the violets enamel the ground in the spring and the gardener's spade in the lettuce-bed strikes the ear dim and far-removed. Or on that secluded bank by the fence behind the small apple-trees, the wild strawberries grow in luscious clusters glowing deep down in thicks of grass. In autumn, over the stone wall by the hickory trees, the woodbine clambers, reddening, and the choke-cherry tree in an angle drips with glistening black fruit. There is the remote upland, where the timothy-grass and feathery wild carrots wave and the meadow-lark builds its nest in a hollow.

At the top of the garden the amenities of cultivation decline gradually into a thicket-studded wilderness. The trim rows of gooseberry and currant bushes dwindle here to a scattering vagrant or two, ripening late and seldom visited.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

The knot-grass spreads unmolested between the tall corn, and a detached grape-trellis cherishes its pink, long clusters, half forgotten.

Up here Yvonne could sit under a balsam-poplar tree, with the dry yellow grass rustling about her knees, and forget entirely that within calling distance was a rambling, white-painted house with people inside in due bondage to domestic routine.

Here she sat one mild afternoon in late autumn, book in hand, but absorbed in other thought. Little tufts of wool from the tree flecked the grass about her. The tented trees on the orchard slopes, globed with late-ripening russets, sheltered her from occasional passers-by on the highway. She seemed shut off from human life. Only now and then in the pauses of the sighing Indian summer, came the click of Draper's lawn mower back and forth, and sonorous puffs of the doctor's directing voice.

Yvonne had occasionally been called upon to take part in a dramatic representation for Helen's Shakespeare Club. To-day she was studying for a rehearsal, but her thoughts would not stay with Katherine.

She had been two years at Orchardhurst

MAKERS OF MANNERS

and the problem of life had begun to present itself to her. The Future troubled her. That morning she had received a letter from Madame Brusseau. She must now be bien-instruite. It was costing beaucoup d'argent. They were glad she was so well content, but it was time to think of marriage. Poléon would come for her in the spring, after his return from the moose-hunting by Lake St. John.

So this was to be the end of it all. After all her vague hopes and visions, La Jeune Vallette again and Poléon. It must not be. Yet she belonged to Poléon, did she not? He had sent her money. And if she returned to La Jeune Vallette she would marry him. She had promised it. A Tahourenché is true to her word. For all Yvonne's French abandon and lightness she was a Tahourenché and a Huron still. She was bound to Poléon if she returned to La Jeune Vallette. If she did not return, she was bound to him still by the many gifts he had sent her.

They should all be paid back to him. Ah, Poléon, you do not know what a power of will there is in that firm-set little mouth and behind those dark, unsmiling eyes.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

The thought of Pierce Willoughby had come to Yvonne many times of late. The thought of him was a smoldering ember. True, she had refused to answer his letters,—there were three unanswered—and Madge, who alone knew of their relation, was pledged to secrecy. He did not know, he could not dream, where she was. Still, she was resentful at his long silence.

Perhaps she would like to see him again. But no, he had left her once. How she would disdain him now! He would find her different, would he not?

The Van Eycks sometimes spoke of him. He wrote books and his name was sometimes in the papers.

How well she had loved him in the Bois des Erables!

Does she love him now?

But Yvonne does not stop to analyze her feelings. A Tahourenché is not introspective.

The Future was like a storm-cloud above her head as she turned to her book again.

"You are pensive, little one," said a low voice.

Brockton Van Eyck dropped down beside her.

MAKERS OF MANNERS

"Helen is a hard task-mistress. Would you not like me for a school-master better?"

His slow words lingered about her like a caressing breeze. She met his light brown eyes fixed, half-admiringly, half-playfully, upon her.

Perhaps the Future had left its shadow upon Yvonne's face. That moment a subtle something passed between these two. Brockton realized Yvonne as a woman worthy of his siege. Yvonne felt Brockton as a man, and a man who moved her. A thrill is untranslatable. In this instance, coarsely paraphrased, with them both it was a sense of relationship. Whether it was to be love, or hate, or submission and mastery, neither could have known.

Yvonne trembled a little, as the thrill sent its darting messages through her blood.

"I am sad," she said, meeting Brockton's eyes, "but I cannot tell why."

This was true.

"It is not the book?" said he, putting his hand on the Shakespeare which lay on her lap and letting it remain there.

"No."

"Nor Helen?"

"Never. Helen is my dear friend."

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Do not 'dear friends' ever make one sad?"

"I do not know."

There was an intimate quality about these questions that half puzzled, half pleased Yvonne.

"It is not I that make you sad?"

Yvonne laughed at the unexpectedness of the idea.

"Why do you laugh?"

Brockton was very serious.

"You, how could you make me sad?"

The aloofness of the *you* was unmistakable.

Brockton's gravity grew deeper, but within himself he smiled.

"You laugh because you say to yourself that I am not a 'dear friend,' and therefore how could I make you sad?"

He spoke deliberately, as if to a child.

"Is it not so?" Yvonne returned quickly.

Brockton continued with a sophistical gleam:

"Helen cannot make you sad because she is a 'dear friend,' and I cannot make you sad because I am not a 'dear friend.' Therefore it is proved you are not sad."

Yvonne, quite aware of the sophistry, as Brockton knew she would be, laughed more merrily than before.

MAKERS OF MANNERS

"It is proved I am not sad," she replied, "because you have made me laugh."

Brockton returned to his serious look.

"But you have made me sad because you say I am not your 'dear friend.' That is unkind."

"I did not wish to be unkind. I am sorry."

"Then you will tell me of what you thought?"

"Must I?"

"To prove your repentance."

"Then I will, Mr. Van Eyck," she said simply, a little resolve suddenly forming itself in her brain.

"If Helen is Helen, I am Brockton," he said, moving round in front of her and lying, half-reclined, on the ground so that he might look her in the face as she talked.

Brockton had never noticed before how agreeable it was to watch her.

"Well?"

He moved a little nearer her and played with a fold in her skirt.

Yvonne told him the story of Willoughby and herself. She named no names. She spoke of herself as another. Brockton understood better than Yvonne imagined.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Did he love the girl if he left her? and she would have gone with him!"

"Cold-hearted fool!" exclaimed Brockton. "By George, Yvonne, he did not love y—her as I should—love a girl."

"Or he was not truthful? He deceived her and did not love her at all?"

"So much the better for me. If he had loved as he ought, what chance should I have now?"

Brockton, somewhat doubtful, was risking a bold venture.

Yvonne's pale, dark cheeks were tinged like a newly opened hickory-nut.

"You do not think it was I?"

"No," said Van Eyck with ready mendacity, "but if it had been you and I had been he—lucky dog—Yvonne, there would have been a different story."

The girl's eyes dropped under the bold amber gaze.

"But I am glad he lied, for y—she may find a man to love her more truly?"

Brockton turned his face away from Yvonne's, as if with a sudden overstress of emotion.

He sprang to his feet and made a few paces up and down in the grass.

MAKERS OF MANNERS

Yvonne sat bewildered under the poplar tree, pulling apart a tuft of wool that had drifted to her lap.

"I have interrupted your study." Van Eyck's voice was changed and dry. "Let me help you a little. I will be Henry to your Katherine."

Yvonne gathered herself together with an effort and took up her lines. Her reserve of self-control was great and she did not show by a flutter the agitation that was within.

"Your majesty shall mock at me. I cannot speak your England."

Brockton was piqued at her calmness.

"O fair Katherine, if you will love me soundly with your French heart, I will be glad to hear you confess it brokenly with your English tongue. Do you like me, Kate?"

Yvonne steadied herself before his glowing look.

"Pardonnez-moi. I cannot tell what is—like me."

So the royal love-making went on, infused on Brockton's side with more of Van Eyck than was compatible with King Henry V.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Yvonne, however, was so bland to his innuendo that he decided his former rôle was preferable.

"Let us shut up the book and talk a little more, Yvonne. La grande passion in Shakespeare does not interest as much as your eyes."

"Your majeste have fausse French enough to deceive de most sage demoiselle dat is en France," Yvonne continued demurely.

Brockton, glancing down the page, decided that he would continue. It was worth the experiment, at least.

"Den it shall also content me."

Yvonne could not resist giving a shy glance, provoquante, at the handsome face bending over the book.

"Then I will kiss your lips, Kate.' Yvonne! but I must, you know, to carry out the part."

How near the face was to hers! Should she let him master her, or should she have the mastery of him? The kiss of surrender in the Bois des Erables rose before her. How unlike that face with its stern gravity, to this, with the mocking smile upon it!

"The kiss is not necessary," said Yvonne.

MAKERS OF MANNERS

"It is most desirable," answered the man, still smiling.

Then he rose to his feet abruptly and left her. Did he see that cold Memory standing between them?

He had the air of one who has tired of a bauble and tosses it down in disgust.

As he sauntered down the grass-grown road, toward the house, his long shadow stretched behind him in the level gold of the setting sun.

CHAPTER V

TRUTH AND UNTRUTH

More potent than disparity in intellectual, emotional or racial point of view is disparity in the moral point of view. It is a vital separating force between two persons in other respects akin.

There was this chasm between Helen and Brockton Van Eyck. By the same rigid standard which regulated Helen's own life did she judge others. Her estimate of Brockton was perhaps more immitigable, that he was her brother. One's personal responsibility for one's blood-relations has often this rasping effect. It might be noticed that the brother and sister had never owned an intimate friendship in common, which is a significant sign.

During the two years of Yvonne's stay at Orchardhurst, she and Helen had been strongly drawn toward each other. The serene steadiness, the individual reserve in the one found its counterpart in the passionate freedom, the racial reserve in the other.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

But as Brockton and Yvonne's enigmatic relationship ripened, Helen and Yvonne drew apart. Helen was consciously sorrowful, and Yvonne, by turns, puzzled and then forgetful.

Brockton's apathy had at last thoroughly been awakened by the mingled shyness and daring of the little French-Huron girl. Her capricious gaiety and indifference had all the effect of the most finished coquetry.

Yvonne was secretive, as shy of expression as any of her forebears that ever tiptoed in silence along a dusky trail. Her frankly confidential manner, her airy vivacity that had won the heart of responsive friends, were only surface froth upon a stream that bubbled up here and there into the light but had its subterranean channel steadfastly underground. She had not yet found herself. This gave her the haunting pensiveness that touched Helen's heart and filled it with anxiety. Helen distrusted Brockton's gallantries. She discovered in him a dangerous capacity of fascination. In fact, he had just discovered it himself.

But the unfathomable look that had crept into Yvonne's eyes was the look of a soul that does not know itself.

So the winter wore away. Always the

TRUTH AND UNTRUTH

shadow of the Future darkened Yvonne's horizon. Many a time she wept, kneeling in her room before her blue-robed statuette of the Virgin. Many a time, at early mass in the little village church, after the befeathered servant-girls had gone out, Yvonne poured out her soul before the folded hands of the Christ. But no help came. The excitement of Brockton's low whispers and gazing eyes, of the dulcet tête-à-têtes by the library fire when the family had gone to the Club, the tantalizing passages on the stairs, as he waylaid her of an evening, all these were a stimulant to her from day to day.

Brockton thought that he was amusing himself. Little did he dream of the long future when Yvonne's image would be always before his eyes.

In the spring, Yvonne was to spend a week with Mrs. Fenton in town. It was a keenly anticipated occasion. Madge was to give a dinner and the French Consul was to be invited and Yvonne was to wear a yellow gown. It was a present from Madge and seemed to Yvonne a bit of the other world.

She remembered how, long ago, when she was a child by the St. Gabriel, she had

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

waded out to pull great bunches of the wild fleur-de-lis and the yellow water-lilies. She had sat under the firs with the gorgeous blooms in her lap and wondered if anywhere in the world there were little girls who wore clothes such as those, shaded purples like the sky before a storm, and a yellow sash, like the golden heart of the flower. Or were there ladies clothed superbly in yellow, a glory that would stand out all around them on the floor, as the great thick lustrous yellow petals swell out on the water?

That impossible fancy had come true and here was she, with a gown as yellow as the lily and as full of shimmering lights as the flag-flower petals.

As the crowning touch to this bliss, Pierce Willoughby was to witness her triumph.

He had just written to Madge that he was to be in town and she had bidden him to the dinner.

"I shall be glad to see him again. I wonder if he would know me," cried Yvonne, her eyes dancing with excitement.

"He would know you out of a thousand, child. You have not changed as much as you think."

"I have not changed at all. I know more,

TRUTH AND UNTRUTH

but I am still the same, the very same, as at Jeune Vallette."

Helen and Yvonne were dressing together before the dinner. Eliza had come in from Spuyten Kill with Helen and was acting as lady's maid for the occasion.

"Well, what do we think of 'Peter Ever-sham'?" asked Helen.

Madge had bought Willoughby's new book and the two girls had been reading it all the afternoon.

"It sounds like him."

"You speak as if you knew him, child."

"I do know him," said Yvonne, one of her sudden moods taking hold of her. "He spent the summer at Jeune Vallette. He said he loved me and then left me."

She was talking in French now, but in the most casual tone of voice, as if lovings and leavings were every-day occurrences with her.

"What do you mean?" cried Helen, slow to grasp so startling a confession.

"That is what I mean."

"And you loved him?"

"I told him so."

"Then I despise him," said Helen with deliberate intensity.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Why don't you say something, Yvonne? Do not you hate him?"

"He was a cold-hearted fool," said Yvonne lingeringly, in unconscious repetition of Brockton.

Her foreign accent relieved this little speech, in some degree, of its baldness. But her heart smote her. So he was insincerity and Brockton was truth! She could not help but compare the two men. Nevertheless, it had taken Willoughby five minutes to say what Van Eyck had been about a year and had not quite said yet. So this is sincerity and that was untruth.

"I was only a child," said Yvonne. self-compassionately, "but I suffered."

Eliza Blodgett went stolidly about the room, with her square English figure and well-trained tread, arranging things, while the two girls talked together in French.

"Eliza, what was that book you lent me last week when I was ill?"

"Do you mean 'Woored, not Wedded,' Miss Brusseau?"

The woman's face lighted up as she turned toward Yvonne. The girl, with her dark face, foreign ways and gentle courtesy

TRUTH AND UNTRUTH

toward Eliza, had come to be a shrine before which all her flowers of romance were secretly laid.

"That tells the story, Helen. He is a grand gentleman and she the simple country maiden. He plays with her, and then, promising to return, leaves her.

"How does it end, Eliza?"

"Sir Bertram marries the Lady Selina, Miss Brusseau," said the woman, with eager detail. "She is false to 'im and at last 'e returns to seek the little love of 'is youth, and the poor gentleman finds she has died of a broken 'eart. It is a grand book at the h'end, Miss Van Eyck. I could ha' wrung my 'andkerchief out three times a-mopping uv my h'eyes h'over it."

"The broken heart might be exchanged in your story," said Helen.

"How is that?"

"He returns; you have not died; he woos again;—you may supply the *dénouement*, Yvonne."

"Charming!" exclaimed the girl, dimpling with mischief.

"You will lead him on, Yvonne, and then—"

"And then I am implacable."

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"That is where the Indian blood comes in, eh?"

Helen touched Yvonne under the chin.

"I don't deny it. I have the Huron idea of heaven, torturing my enemies."

The gay little laugh wreathed the grim idea with garlands.

"And still," judicial Helen said, "he first gave you the cup of life to taste."

"And took it away when I had put my lips to the brim."

"Perhaps," Helen relented, "he was sincere and would have returned to you—"

"Never!"

"And would have lived the simple life he believed in—"

"Pah!" came from Yvonne.

"And would have outgrown it and brought you back to the world with him—"

"Trop de badinage," laughed Yvonne.
"Stop, *Helène*."

She went to the mirror to survey her completed toilet. The yellow dress was heavy and lustrous, with a barbaric touch of dusky purple about the low-cut neck. It brought out the brown tints in her skin and emphasized her natural pallor. She surveyed herself with dissatisfaction.

TRUTH AND UNTRUTH

"It extinguishes me," she said, looking backward at the reflection of herself.

She faced round again.

"Too much la Huronne!" she exclaimed.

Her face suddenly took on, to herself, the look of Tissette Gros-Louys. It seemed brown and narrow, with bird-of-prey eyes and too white teeth. Shaking herself free of the thought, she pinned a purple fleur-de-lis in the hair that crowned her head. Helen had brought a bunch of them from Orchardhurst that afternoon.

"Now you will do," she said, dusting some powder over her cheeks, and adjusting her expression to her costume. It was wonderful how the uncompromising Indian look had given way before the new resolve. It was thus that she went downstairs.

The French consul was there; also Fitz-Simmons, through the death of his father and elder brother become Lord Alstonmeade; Brockton Van Eyck, the traces of last night's dissipation immaculately groomed away; Tom Barry, the English actor; and a group of lovely women. There was Cornelia Livingston, short, plump and piquant, who did the petite blonde to perfection; Helen, slim and erect, with thin

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

lips well-curved, and straight eyebrows meeting above keen gray eyes; Elizabeth Dawson, whose father was a senator, and whose sweet blue eyes and ready smile had served her father many a turn, they said, in Washington; and Yvonne Brusseau, the purple fleur-de-lis in the satiny loops of her black hair.

A subdued murmur of pleasure arose when word was passed that Pierce Willoughby was to be a guest that evening, for every one was interested to meet the author of "Peter Eversham, Reformer." Pierce Willoughby was announced and Yvonne Brusseau watched the entrance of her old friend and lover. She saw a tall, well-knit young man, close-shaven, the clear forward glance of the eyes and the firm mouth and chin showing something of the strength that bade fair to make him a leader in the political and civic life of the western metropolis. His forehead and eyes were in such notable contrast with the lower part of his face that people often remarked, referring to the one and the other: "There lies his failure, and there, his success." He had the eyes of an enthusiast, a dreamer, while his mouth and chin, resolute almost to

TRUTH AND UNTRUTH

hardness, belonged to the aggressive man of action.

All that Pierce Willoughby saw in Mrs. Fenton's drawing-room, all that he ever remembered of his first entrance there, was a shimmer of yellow, a stately inclination of a little dark head, crowned with a purple flag-flower; and a pair of black eyes, that veiled their glances as they met his own.

Yvonne's place at dinner was next to the Frenchman, Amadis de Rocelles. The Consul thought she had worn the fleur-de-lis in compliment to France. Willoughby thought it in memory of La Jongleuse. Both men were puzzled, and both pleased. Willoughby noticed at table that his friend Madge had become, in the five years since he had seen her, a little more gracious, a little more reposeful, but with the same direct, spontaneous speech, unassuming dignity, and sparkle of magnetism that made a circle of good fellowship of the people whom she might have about her. He sat between Helen Van Eyck and Elizabeth Dawson, and opposite him was Yvonne, a picture that he never forgot. Conversation glanced from topic to topic; Tom Barry's new play was mentioned, which he was to

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

bring out in the fall; the prospect for the intercollegiate boat race; a New York society woman's venture into millinery and the new police-commissioner's stand, on which Willoughby spoke, as he had come to the city to look up that and kindred subjects.

Willoughby held the attention of the table for a few moments while he talked about civic conditions in the west. He assumed the unnecessary authority that a young man sometimes will among new acquaintances.

"The indifference of the educated," he said, "is more sinister than the corruption of the masses."

His earnestness jarred a little on the flutter of dinner-talk. Socialistic ideas had not penetrated thoroughly into polite society, and though Willoughby had not propounded any radical theory, there was something uncompromising about his tone. It smacked of social documents.

"We Americans," said Fenton, as relevantly as he thought best, "should study London municipal management. The city boss is our dangerous element."

"True," said Barry lightly, "but picturesque. Our municipal politics are dull and

TRUTH AND UNTRUTH

tame compared with the drama that Tammany offers."

"I agree with you, Mr. Barry," said Elizabeth Dawson, who did not quite get the difference between municipal politics and diplomatic teas in Washington. "These attachés with curled mustaches and foreign ambassadors with gorgeous clothes. Don't you like it, Mr. Fenton?"

"Immense!" assented Fenton heartily.

Everybody laughed and the conversation drifted off again, till Willoughby brought it back by telling a story of a reform candidate's defeat through the assistance which he accepted from the head of a well-known temperance organization. This malaprop reinforcement ruined his chances with the laboring people. After the election, the supposed coadjutor received a lucrative appointment from the successful candidate and upon being reproached by the defeated reformer for his change of base, replied with a sneer:

"I was working for my man all along."

It was a striking story and Willoughby told it well. It illustrated the crying need of business acumen among those who enter political life to purify it.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"That's an artistic tale," said Helen Van Eyck, when he had finished.

Perhaps she knew the comment would displease him. He had told the story not in the dilettante but in the good-citizen spirit. There was something about him that roused her antagonism. Whether it were his crudeness, his egotism or his apostolic severity, she would not have been able to say.

"It's more than a good story, Miss Van Eyck, it proves something."

"What does it prove, Mr. Willoughby?"

Willoughby glanced at the questioner a moment and decided that it would not be worth his while to answer her seriously.

"That a gentleman should keep out of politics, perhaps," he replied, and then turned to Elizabeth Dawson with some light remark.

Helen felt that Willoughby had been taking her estimate, and resented it.

They were speaking afterward of a college man who had achieved several degrees but had been in practical life a notable failure.

"Don't you think, Mr. Willoughby, that most of us are educated beyond our capacity?" said Helen, fixing her serious gaze on Pierce.

TRUTH AND UNTRUTH

"Beyond what is good for us?" he questioned tentatively.

"Civilization was once your *bête noir*, Mr. Willoughby. Are you still afraid of it?" asked Yvonne, leaning forward.

Her speech had the foreign flavor that lent piquancy to what she said.

Pierce was surprised at this allusion to the past, but took it as a challenge and replied:

"The theory I used to hold, Miss Brusseau, I have found out this evening is not of universal application."

In the drawing-room after dinner Tom Barry had been mimicking a "negro" minstrel whose performance he had seen in a London music hall. Under cover of the laugh that followed, Willoughby said to Yvonne in a low voice:

"Yvonne, have we nothing to say to each other?"

"Of what should we speak?" she said in her quietest tone.

"Have you forgotten the day-dream by the St. Gabriel? I have not. And the—all the rest. And you—you carry with you this evening a living memory, Yvonne."

He looked at the flower in her hair.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

She took it out and let the limp, crépy petals curve caressingly over her fingers.

"Oh, la Jongleuse!" she exclaimed, with such a merry laugh that Pierce understood all at once how little he had understood the Yvonne of Vallette. Amadis de Rocelles cast his jaded eyes over to the divan and envied the man who could summon such a delicious ripple. Tom Barry wished he could hire a laugh like that for his play, "The Foolish Virgins."

"I must see you again," Pierce went on rather incoherently, but feeling that each moment with her might be the last. "It is rare good fortune to have you here."

"Yet, if you had your way, I should still be there."

Yvonne's tone and look were reproachful. Pierce waited a moment for the arch smile that he thought would follow. But Yvonne did not smile.

"Yes," he answered gravely.

"Are you glad or sorry that I am here?" she asked.

"I am glad and I am sorry," he returned. "If I knew what difference it would make with me, I should know which to be."

He was looking at her intently. She

TRUTH AND UNTRUTH

flushed and rose to meet Madge, who was approaching them. They had asked for a dramatic reading from Miss Brusseau. She demurred smilingly, saying:

"I am afraid of that Mr. Barry."

She finally chose the poison-scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, where Juliet imagines the horrors of the tomb. Tom Barry's face assumed an expression of polite interest; Brockton's of undisguised admiration.

De Rocelles, as Yvonne took her place on a low stool between portières, ran a connoisseur's eye over the details of her costume and figure.

"Do you approve?" whispered Tom Barry, with the merest suggestion of a twinkle in his sad, humorous eyes.

Yvonne interpreted Juliet's emotion somewhat in the conventional way, not overdoing it, however, as so many actresses have done.

Tom Barry's expression changed from polite to genuine interest and when she finished he exclaimed, meeting her eyes, which sought his:

"Capital."

Yvonne paled a little. Madge saw that she was deeply moved by the commendation.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Before he left the Fentons' that night, Willoughby decided that the police business would require, instead of two days, two weeks of investigation.

CHAPTER VI

A SPRING WALK

Van Eyck and Willoughby were leaving the house together after the dinner. They had been old-time neighbors for many years, but never chums. Pierce Willoughby had been a serious lad. The burden of life was thrust early upon his shoulders, and he had found little in common with the boyish dilettantism of Van Eyck. But as they walked down the street they felt that sense of intimacy which a renewal of old relations will sometimes bring. If one meets a fellow-townsmen in a foreign land, one grasps him by the hand like a dear comrade. Also, each had perceived in the other's bearing toward Yvonne a curious something which was as obvious as it was indefinite.

Brockton concluded that Yvonne's unique grace had made an impression, and he was rather pleased. Just as in the fall, her little triumph at the tea had first awakened him to her charm, so now Willoughby's evident

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

interest added new piquancy to the game he was playing.

"Our little protégé has hit it off pretty well," he remarked, lightly.

"Indeed, she has wonderfully developed," answered Willoughby, taking for granted that the mere fact of their previous acquaintanceship was known.

"Oho," thought Brockton, piecing together the fragments of Yvonne's story. "It was you, then?"

He was quick to know that "cold-hearted fool" had been misapplied. His perception of character was as keen as Helen's, but unlike her, he would not regret the misapplication. On the contrary, he was a little glad.

The two men continued, touching casually on current affairs in politics and literature.

"Run out to Orchardhurst before you go," said Van Eyck, cordially, as they parted at a street corner. Willoughby resolved that he would, and when the more urgent invitation came from Mrs. Van Eyck he eagerly accepted.

It was one of those youthful spring days when the trees are misted as if a green spray had broken over them, and the blossomy tips

A SPRING WALK

of birches and alders are a delicate intimation of the fires of autumn. Underneath the austere trunks of the forest trees the footling oaks were as rosy and velvety as a baby's cheek. By the released blue of April waters the bodiless chimes of hylodes twinkled widely.

It was one of Yvonne's holy-days, and she was going to church, the little church away down among the crooked village streets on the sandy bluffs above the river. Willoughby was at Orchardhurst, and four of them were taking the walk together, a good three miles from the doctor's house on its hill-slope.

Spuyten Kill lies windingly among its hills, with its one broad road running north and south between overarching trees and walled estates, breadths of billowy lawns and porticoed stately houses. Between these and the river are the steep village streets, lined with shops and little, old-fashioned, white-fenced houses of plain folk, and above stretches the undulating hill-country. Long country roads twist and climb eastward past the mile-long boundaries of manorial owners, woodland patches, rich swamps and untenanted hills.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

It was a country that Willoughby knew and loved. It moved him intensely to think that the girl he loved had become part owner with him of this cherished loveliness.

The three miles stretched most alluringly before him as they passed out of the gate and began to descend the long hill toward the broad village street. But as perverse chance would have it, Brockton strode forward by Yvonne, and Willoughby was left to walk with Helen and watch Yvonne's black hair and the nodding "yellow daisies" on her hat, or her side glances toward her companion in the snatches of their animated talk.

He had even an insane desire to know what they were saying, and an entirely unreasonable irritation with Helen for a remark interrupting a laugh of Yvonne's that had just drifted back.

It is hard to get away from one's youthful conceptions. Willoughby's memory of Helen was of a silent child who did not give herself to others. Somehow, he did not expect to come into contact with her. There is nothing duller than intercourse without contact. As for Helen, she attributed Willoughby's undisguised preoccupation to his

A SPRING WALK

sense of self-importance and this strengthened her prejudice against him.

"At the top of that slide of rock," said Willoughby, pointing ahead, "and just under the fence, there used to be a little colony of dark purple long-stemmed violets. I am going to look for them now."

He sprang up the road-side bank.

"Just as they were ten years ago," he exclaimed, bringing back a cluster in his hands.

He divided the flowers between Yvonne and Helen. As he handed them to Yvonne, Helen heard him say:

"Do you remember the purple-lined white August violets by the spring in the maple-wood?"

"The violets that would have died in the Rue Fabrique?" she answered, rememberingly, teasingly.

As their eyes met Helen caught herself watching them and reflecting:

"One would have said his are the pleading and hers the eyes that mock."

It occurred to her that there was a chance of his sincerity. She repelled the thought as disloyal to Yvonne.

"How deep-seated is this love of place!"

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

mused Willoughby, half to himself, as he resumed his walk by Helen. "It is a curious thing that never since I left Spuyten Kill ten years ago have my dreams been elsewhere. Whenever they have had a local habitation and a name it has been here. I have sometimes returned from an assignment on a horrid railroad strike or from a detail in a midnight police-court only to spend my night wading in the peaceful little Pokamo or hunting blackberries in sequestered thickets."

"It must be a pleasure," said Helen, "to free one's self in dreams of painful realities."

She was touched by the simplicity of Willoughby's tone.

"'In sleep a king, but waking, no such matter,' " quoted the young man.

Helen drew him on to tell of his newspaper experiences. But they were all so novel to her she could not throw herself into them. They drifted apart again. Willoughby felt her lack of sympathy, and an awkward silence ensued.

They were passing now along the village highway. In contrast with well-kept lawns and trim shrubbery was one old place, over-

A SPRING WALK

grown lilac-bushes guarding it from the street, the gray, weather-beaten wooden house standing far back among pine-trees, and a brindled cow grazing on the shaggy, erst-time lawn.

A little wicket-gate opened invitingly into the street, tempting one within to follow a winding path that seemed to end in a little circular pavilion.

"And here the thirsty traveler may enter in and drink," said Willoughby. "What a hospitable thought of the old gentleman's! How often have I stooped down and called him blessed!"

They wended their way to the little pavilion that sheltered a deep stone-built spring. How dark and cool it was! The green moss was thick as plush on the stone sides above the water.

Pierce was eagerly first in reaching down, arm's length, into the limpid pool and putting the sparkling, overbrimming tin cup into Yvonne's hand.

"And here one may rest weary limbs," said Brockton, throwing himself languidly down upon the circular stone bench.

"The April sun is really hot," and Helen sat beside him.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Willoughby seized the opportunity for a few murmured words to Yvonne.

"I am going to show Miss Yvonne the rockery behind the house," he remarked to brother and sister. "I presume it will have dwindled sadly since the days when it seemed to my youthful eyes a fragment of Alpine landscape."

He seemed very blithe and buoyant as he walked away with Yvonne. A comfortable family silence ensued on the circular bench.

When the walk was resumed, Brockton, taking the initiative, was Yvonne's companion again. The two men looked at each other a moment, with mutual recognition of a vague rivalry.

Helen and Pierce talked little. The beautiful street looped and unlooped itself before their footsteps. The afternoon air was full of twitterings of home-building birds. Little children were picking dandelions in sunny yards. The blue river shone here and there in glimpses at the end of cross-roads. All was bathed in that gentle pathos of spring, the pathos of a hundred forgotten springs gone before, like the pathos of remembered laughter from lips that are dead.

A SPRING WALK

"It is a great joy to me," said Willoughby, in a deep, moved voice, "that Yvonne should know all this of mine as I know that land of hers."

Helen looked at him in surprise, for he spoke like a man who has always been true to truth. Willoughby noticed her look, and thought he had gone too far in self-revelment.

Just then Brockton and Yvonne, ahead of them, paused at an intersection of roads. The cross-street led to the little Catholic church on the low sand-hill by the river. Brockton was remonstrating with Yvonne, and then Willoughby saw him snatch her hand and hold it for a moment to his breast. It was the passionate, quick gesture of one who thinks himself unnoticed.

Willoughby, in the midst of a sentence, was suddenly silent, as if he had been struck. Helen, looking up, saw the pained look of him.

"I am going to leave you here," said Yvonne. "No, do not accompany me. It is only a few minutes' walk. I will meet you after vespers——"

"We might go round to the Old Dutch Church in the Hollow," began Helen.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"And I will join you on the bridge over the Pokamo, in about an hour," Yvonne replied.

The three walked slowly on, when Willoughby stopped abruptly.

"Pardon me," he said, "we used to go to church together at Jeune Vallette. I should like to do so again for old times' sake."

Brockton acknowledged himself checkmated as Willoughby's rapid retreating steps sounded down the road. During the afternoon's walk, with all his facility in innuendo and flattery, he had been casting about Yvonne the subtle bonds of a strong, unuttered passion.

He recognized the dominating quality in Willoughby, the strong, unswervable current of his nature, and Brockton resolved to counteract any renewed influence he might exert over Yvonne. Not that he himself was serious in his desire to win her. Marriage had never entered into his head except as ridiculous folly. Nevertheless, he believed himself in love with her, and wanted at least the delicious titillation of inspiring love in return. Yvonne's difficult reserve and the tacit rivalry of Willoughby made this end more than ever desirable, but

A SPRING WALK

it must be accomplished without self-compromise.

Yvonne, with her ununified aims and desires, was bewildered by the manifold phases of life. The rich warmth of an unsundered nature, longing for outlet, surged up continually in her heart, like a restless tide against the sea-wall.

Her ears were full of Van Eyck's melting tones, and her pulses still throbbed with his touch, and now she drooped beneath Willoughby's intense gaze and the repression of his voice. With a long sigh of relief, she threw herself on her knees in the clammy gloom of the tawdry little church and told her prayers with passionate fervor. And as she prayed, she forgot the blue shimmer of spring outside and the shadow of the Future was again above her head. Only a few more weeks and it would be upon her. The dreadful Known would take the place of the beautiful Unknown.

CHAPTER VII

AN INDIAN HEAVEN

Yvonne was spending a few days with the Fentons in town. It was her last month, and they were doing their best to make her happy.

Helen was also there, having come into town, servant-hunting. Eliza Blodgett was homesick, and had announced a speedy return to England.

Mr. and Mrs. Fenton, in the absence of their guests, were talking things over. "Things" usually meant Yvonne.

"And though it is no sign," Madge said, "that if a man is unhappy without a girl he will be happy with her, still I think that Yvonne is well adapted to Pierce."

"He is certainly unhappy without her," said Mr. Fenton, and just then Mr. Willoughby was announced at the door. He came in with Helen Van Eyck, and both of them looked serious. They had met, as Helen explained, in the park, and had found

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

that they were directed toward the same destination.

"And we have been having the most delightful quarrel," said Helen, with a doubtful glance at Pierce.

It is dangerous to carry on a discussion with a person whom we analyze unfavorably.

"Over what?" said Madge, handing Helen a cup of tea.

"Quite impersonal — the character of Ibsen's Brand."

"I will leave it to Mrs. Fenton whether it was impersonal or not," said Pierce, with a slight smile. "Miss Van Eyck, in contention against my statement that Brand was not a natural character, points to me and calls me Brand."

"And don't you think he is?" asked Helen. "Wouldn't he stake all on a theory and sacrifice the common duties of life for a beautiful idea?"

"What did Brand do? I have forgotten," asked Madge.

"I know," said Yvonne, who entered in time to hear the last question. "I went to Professor Thorwald's lecture last week. He gave up the woman he loved, rather than give up an idea."

AN INDIAN HEAVEN

Yvonne's face, as she said this, bore a look of eerie innocence. Helen looked at her sharply. Knowing a little of the relations between her and Willoughby, Helen felt the thrust. She saw that Pierce had suddenly sobered, and that the lines about his face were drawn.

After Helen had gone home, Pierce and Yvonne were left by themselves in the library.

The girl, in her new environment, was still a study to the young man. She seemed to fit in admirably with Morris tiles, Venetian water-colors, teak-wood tables and French-bound books, and yet, he could but wonder.

"Why do you look at me so? It is not polite."

Willoughby laughed apologetically, and admitted that he was thinking.

"It is so unusual, you know, to see any one think that it puzzled me," Yvonne went on.

She fingered the red roses which Willoughby the day before had brought her.

"You are quite happy here?" he questioned vaguely. "It satisfies you? You have everything?"

Yvonne looked about her as if in search of an answer. Her eyes rested on a Sèvres bowl that held Roman hyacinths. She turned her eyes toward Willoughby, and they looked like a purple-black cloud that has in its heart the forked lightning.

"Only one thing I lack," she burst out, "a mountain forest."

"You have the park," Willoughby said, with gentle irony, "and also the apple-trees at Orchardhurst. You should be content."

"They smell of man," said Yvonne, fiercely. "Do you remember the forest on la Montagne Ronde? Untamed from base to summit, lonely, dense, still. And one startled deer looking at you, when you have sat under an oak for an hour."

Willoughby was unconsciously led on by her reminiscent semi-confidential tone. She had baffled him somewhat these last few days. He had not dared to say to her words that were in his heart.

"Yvonne, I believe I, best of all, understand you. I knew you then, and I know you now."

"How little, either then or now!" she thought.

But aloud:

AN INDIAN HEAVEN

"Yes, Pierce, you knew me—dans le temps jadis."

Again she led him on, for a swift impulse had come to her—an impulse such as Indians have.

"I was young then," he said, "and foolish. My views have changed, but not my heart."

As she leaned toward him and listened eagerly, hope began to revive in Willoughby's heart.

"I, too, was young," she said, "and foolish. I, too, have changed, but I have not forgotten."

She wished Poléon could hear her.

Willoughby smiled to think how they were talking like two old sages.

"We are neither of us very old," he said. "Life lies before us just as it did then, only now we need not delay our pilgrimage, and we want no guide."

"And where does the way go?" asked Yvonne, following his mood deliciously.

"I only know where mine goes." Willoughby was intent and earnest. "Where you are. Let us never be separated again."

"We have been separated so long," said Yvonne, as if urging an impersonal cause.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"We shall be all the happier now," answered Willoughby, with tender vehemence.

An expression flitting across Yvonne's face made him fear.

"What is it?" he said, apprehensively. "There is nothing to come between us? Yvonne, tell me but once more that you love me, as you did——"

"Dans le temps jadis," said Yvonne, repeating the phrase which she loved so well.

At last her cup of triumph was full.

"Then and now are two different words," she went on coldly and precisely.

"When you come to pick up the bauble that you once threw away——"

"Threw away! Yvonne!" said Willoughby, reproachfully.

"That you once threw away,"—Yvonne was taking a solemn, youthful joy in the melodramatic—"you find it is yours no more. Pierce Willoughby, you come too late."

"This is your revenge," he said, brokenly, with no shade of bitterness, "and now that you have had it, be content."

With his own great, abiding love, he could

AN INDIAN HEAVEN

not but imagine he would find some response in her.

"Say but the word, Yvonne, and I will take you anywhere, do all that you ask. You loved me once. Surely you love me still."

Yvonne rose with a dramatic air of dismissal.

"You forget how long ago," she said, with careless scorn, "and it wearies one to wait."

She put out her hand.

"But we may be good friends, Pierce, for I learned from you my first lesson."

The French blood conquered the Indian. Her resentment was appeased. She began to have pleasant thoughts of Willoughby, and even to pity him.

But to him her patronage was crueller than her scorn.

The next day he called at the Fentons to say good-bye. He saw only Helen and Yvonne, as Madge had gone out. There was that coldness in his manner which with some men marks the suppression of strong emotion. After ten minutes, during which nothing particular was said, he rose and shook hands with them both.

"Good-bye, Miss Van Eyck."

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Good-bye, Miss Brusseau, Yvonne," he added, in a lower tone. He held her hand an instant longer than he ought to have done, and then left.

Helen walked to the window, and watched him, a strong, athletic figure, as he strode down the street.

"So he really cares for her," she thought.

He stumbled over a child's sled that lay on the sidewalk.

"He is not looking where he goes," she said to herself.

Then returning to the table she exclaimed, with apparent irrelevance:

"Yvonne, I believe you have no heart."

"I believe so, too," said Yvonne. "But you advised it."

"He deserves it," said Helen, "but then—I am sorry for him."

"Il ne me fait rien," answered Yvonne. "He would have left me there, like a lost child on the moon."

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN THE BIRDS FLY

It was six o'clock in the morning and springtime in the Park. Yvonne was alone, on a little walk that wound in and out among rocks and wild places, up hill and down hill, between flowering shrubs here and under spreading branches there. The air was sweet with spring smells of blossoming bushes and trees. Here the lilacs were a mass of purple, and there the flowering quince bourgeoned out in crimson. The wild columbine nodded its honey-horns between crevices of the rocks, and where there was a light layer of soil the saxifrage spread itself out like a white powder.

Yvonne climbed up the tortuous path until she came to a little upland where there were apple-trees in bloom. The dew still shimmered on the circular spider-webs that lay on the short-cropped grass. Yvonne stood still and took off her hat. She went under an apple tree and looked up into the sky, deliciously blue in the rifts of the pink-

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

petaled fragrance above her. She drew a long breath.

Then a thrush on a neighboring locust broke out into a glorious, passionate bubble of song.

"Oh, you dear world!" Yvonne said, lifting her arms as if to embrace the universe.

"Green things and blue things and pink-and-whiteness. Dear May! How I love you! Dear God, I cannot enjoy them enough."

Then in the midst of all that rapture a coldness crept over her.

"Ah, it is I," she cried, still with hands upraised. "I. What do I want? Dear God, why am I here? Tell me."

She waited, with lips parted, looking upward into the luminous blue of heaven.

A little shiver of breeze sent a flurry of petals down upon her face and hair.

"Love — love — love —" warbled the thrush.

"No, not love." Yvonne dropped her arms. "It is beyond me. I cannot love."

She thought of Van Eyck. She thought of Willoughby. She shuddered when she thought of de Rocelles.

WHEN THE BIRDS FLY

"No, no, not marriage—I am beyond it."

"Love—love—love," warbled the thrush.

"Dear God, no. Not Poléon. I will not love him. Not yet, not yet. Not in Jeune Vallette again. Not my people."

She dropped on her knees beside the rough tree-trunk, her crisp skirt flaring out over the wet grass.

Her lips moved as if in prayer.

A blackbird near by frolicked out a snatch.

Yvonne rose and tripped into the little gravel path. The wet, pink petals still clung to her black hair.

"Pivart crie
Signe de la pluie——"

She piped the rhyme of her childhood.

Then the joy of life seized her again, and holding up her pink cotton skirt in either hand, she fell to singing and dancing as she had used in the fêtes du rivièrè by the St. Gabriel.

It chanced that a horseman was taking his early ride on the bridle-path not far away. He heard the singing voice and stopped, watching the gay little figure in its dramatic evolutions.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

The song was Cécilia, and the last time Yvonne had sung it was under the pine-trees in front of Poléon. It runs thus:

Mon père n'avait fille que moi.
Encor' sur la mère il m'envoie.
Sautez, mignonne, Cécilia,
Ah! ah, Cecilia.

(Here one dances.)

Encor' sur la mère il m'envoie.
Le marinier qui m'y menait——

(Here one mimics the sailor.)

Sautez, mignonne, etc.

(Here one dances.)

Le marinier qui m'y menait,

(Here one mimics a love-sick sailor.)

Il devait amoureux de moi——

(Refrain and dance.)

Il devait amoureux de moi.

Ma mignonnette, embrassez-moi.

(More mimicry.)

(Refrain and dance.)

Ma mignonnette, embrassez-moi
Nenni, Monsieur, je n'oserais.

WHEN THE BIRDS FLY

(One mimics a shy but not unwilling girl.)
(Refrain and dance.)

Nenni, Monsieur, je n'oserais,
Car si papan le savait.

(One mimics a stern papa.)
(Refrain and dance.)

Car si papan le savait,
Fille battue ce serait moi.

(One mimics a frightened girl.)
(Refrain and dance.)

Fille battue ce serait moi,
Voulez-vous, bell', qui lui dirait?

(Lover holds her in his arms now.)
(Refrain and languishing dance.)

Voulez-vous, bell', qui lui dirait?
Ce serait les oiseaux des bois.

(One mimics the birds.)
(Refrain and dance.)

Ce serait les oiseaux des bois,
Les oiseaux des bois parlent-ils?

(One mimics the sailor's amaze.)
(Refrain and dance.)

Les oiseaux des bois parlent-ils?
Ils parlent français, latin aussi.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

(One is saucily triumphant.)

(Refrain and dance.)

Ils parlent français, latin aussi,
Helas! que le monde est malin.

(One is comically sad.)

D'apprendre aux oiseaux le latin.

(Laughter, dance and refrain.)

Sautez, mignonne, Cécilia.
Ah, ah! Cécilia.

"Bravo!" said a voice behind her.

Yvonne looked round. It was Tom Barry who had alighted from his horse and was leading him across the grass between the little apple-trees.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed Yvonne, in the Jenue Vallette way, throwing up her hands.
"Mr. Barry!"

"Miss Brusseau!" exclaimed the actor, with assumed equal surprise.

Then they both laughed and felt well acquainted.

"What are you doing here so early in the morning?" asked Tom Barry.

"Une petite sauterie. Et vous?"

"Watching it. It was delicious, my child."

WHEN THE BIRDS FLY

Yvonne looked unusually child-like in her morning frock, her hair a little disordered and her cheeks dusky warm.

She dropped a quaint courtesy in return for Mr. Barry's compliment.

"Really!" he repeated. "You would take a London music-hall by storm. Where did you learn such a pretty piece?"

"In my home; in Canada. You know, I am a French-Canadian. And of the Huron race, long ago. I can do ever so many more pieces like that. Could I earn my living by singing and dancing them?"

Yvonne was talking excitedly, for an idea had burst in her brain.

The English actor was taken aback. He had met Yvonne under conventional surroundings, and had never imagined her as having other than the conventional antecedents.

"May I walk with you?" he said. "I must take Trouble back to the bridle-path, where he belongs. We will walk on the meadow there, beside."

Yvonne was pinning on her straw hat, and under its yellow brim, with the black-eyed Susans nodding above, she looked tawnier and prettier than ever.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

She had received a letter from her cousin Poléon the evening before, in which he had said that they would send her no more money, and he was coming soon to take her back to La Jeune Vallette. It was this unwelcome news which had stirred her up to the early morning walk in the Park. Yvonne could always think better under the open sky.

"I want so much to earn my living," said Yvonne, gravely.

Tom Barry looked at her curiously.

"You see," she went on, confidentially, "I have no money of my own, and my cousin is coming to get me, and I will not go with him. No, never."

"Have you consulted with your friends?" said Tom Barry, trying to get the conversation back upon a more formal basis.

"Mon Dieu, no," said Yvonne, shrugging her shoulders. "I am afraid they are tired of me already, and they could not interfere with the wish of my family. I will not be dependent. They have done too much for me now. No, to be free, I must run away and no one must know where I am—Mr. Barry, will you help me?"

"I sail for England to-morrow," he said.

WHEN THE BIRDS FLY

"Oh!" She stood still and clasped her hands about his arm.

"Take me with you. I will sing and dance for you in your theater."

Poor Yvonne! She did not understand the cold, kindly barrier that Mr. Barry put up between himself and her pleadings. So gracious he had been a moment ago, and now she felt as if there were a stone wall between them.

"I am afraid in my theater there would be no opportunity for such work as yours. But if you should ever come to London, Miss Brusseau, I will put you in the way of some people who might be useful to you."

Yvonne clutched at the straw.

"You think I could really please people in the theater?"

Tom Barry was sorry he had committed himself so far already. But if the girl was in earnest it would do no harm to tell her the truth.

"I should have to see your work under different circumstances to give a candid opinion. But I think you would have great talent as—as—a vaudeville artist——"

"Thank you," said Yvonne.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

After that she became quite commonplace again.

It was during the morning of that same day that Madge and Horace were talking together.

"I feel as if this were the end of the chapter with our protégé, Madge. She has sent Willoughby away. Brockton? He is never in earnest. What next?"

"I am disappointed, Horace. Pierce told me how much he cared for her. He's such a single-hearted fellow. I believe she's been the dream of his life ever since he first knew her."

"And you don't think she cares for him in the least?"

"No, I think not. But somehow I don't understand her. She seems to have no sentiment, for a young girl."

"And what's worse," Fenton said, "she has no worldly wisdom to take its place."

"For instance," Madge went on, "she shows no more feeling for Pierce Willoughby, that splendid, genuine fellow, than she did for a starched youth like Fitz-Simmons. And Pierce, he is bound up in her. But, as Helen said, he will go on doing his work in life, trampling his feelings under

foot, too proud to grieve, too brave to falter, till his heart and brain are burnt out together."

"Helen said that, did she?" mused Fenton. "Don't you think that Helen understands Willoughby wonderfully well?"

They heard a slight sound from Mrs. Fenton's sitting-room, which adjoined the library, and Yvonne appeared through the portières.

"I have been sleeping," she said. "I was up too early this morning."

"Five o'clock, was it?" answered Horace. "That is a brutal hour, Yvonne."

The girl picked up her hat from the table, and walked toward the door.

"I am going down-town with Helen," she said. "Au revoir, mes amis."

She waved them a kiss through the door as she went out.

Husband and wife looked at each other.

Helen and Yvonne, walking past the shops on Sixth Avenue, talked idly. Such things as the kaleidoscopic windows brought to view—iridescent bubbles of glass, turquoise-blue fantasies in millinery, blossoming white heather, jeweled barbarities in buckles, sinuous poster-ladies,—these were their

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

themes of discourse, till Helen cried suddenly:

"I am sick of it all, Yvonne. Child of the wilderness, how can you be content?"

"Perhaps I am not," said Yvonne, remembering her sunrise feelings under the apple-trees.

"What then?" asked Helen.

"Who knows?" and the shadow of the pine-tree crept over Yvonne's face, the pine-tree under which her forebears had fashioned arrows centuries ago. But Helen had never known the pine-tree and did not observe its shadow.

"As for me," Helen went on, "life holds little in store for those who begin with everything."

She bowed to a young woman who was passing. She was dressed with a certain freedom and walked with an air of detachment from her surroundings.

"What a thoughtful face!" said Yvonne.

"It is Miss Stuart. She is just home from college on her spring vacation. I wish I were a college woman, Yvonne."

"Why?"

"They have so much to think about besides the passing fashion. Their lives are

WHEN THE BIRDS FLY

full. And if they don't want to live in one world, they have others."

"Each on his separate star?" laughed Yvonne.

"They believe in things as they see them—For the God of things as they are," finished Helen.

"You should have been one of us at La Jeune Vallette."

"Ah, but I could not have forgotten, as you have done, Yvonne."

"One does not forget," said Yvonne. "But sometimes one does not talk."

"Oh," answered Helen. It was a quick, reflective "oh," like a comet that leaves a tail of light behind it.

Yvonne was thinking of her cousin, The-One-Who-Never-Forgets.

"What I need," added Helen, with apparent, not real, irrelevance, "is the sting of something to make me work. Poverty, for instance. I believe I could write."

"Do it," cried Yvonne. "And if you would only like Pierce Willoughby, he would help you, I am sure."

"He is clever, but too much le poseur, is he not?" said Helen. "I believe I could never accept his judgments. He surveys

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

his intellectual self in a looking-glass, and puts on or takes off as is becoming to him."

"You and he——" began Yvonne, with a mischievous intonation.

"Please!" remonstrated Helen, gravely.

They had reached the tailor's, and Helen said she would go in for her fitting. So Yvonne left her there, with a gay good-bye.

When Helen returned to dinner that evening Yvonne had not yet arrived.

"It is very strange," Madge was saying, and then the servant came in with a note.

Madge read it in silence. Her face turned white, and she handed it to Helen. The note was a brief one from Yvonne, saying that she had left them all. They were not to look for her nor trouble themselves. She would return sometime, but till then let it be as if they had never known her.

The days passed, and despite their utmost efforts they found no clew to the whereabouts of the missing girl. The boy who brought the note had gone. Helen knew nothing of her friend from the time when they had parted on the street.

Madge remembered that Yvonne had received a letter from Canada the evening before her disappearance, the contents of

WHEN THE BIRDS FLY

which had apparently disturbed her. They also recalled their conversation in the library the next morning, which Yvonne might have overheard.

"She has gone to her woods again," said Horace. "Longing for the wilderness may have seized her, a longing the Indian and the gypsy can never overcome."

Madge wrote to Madame in Canada and her husband to Pierce Willoughby. By and by came a stormy visitor from La Jeune Vallette in the person of Poléon Gros-Louys. The Fentons entertained him kindly, and told him the extent of their endeavors. He spent the days in ceaseless walking up and down of New York's streets and avenues. He peered into the oddest corners and searched the unlikeliest places. But his woodcraft stood him in small stead amid the intricacies of a great city. Finally, with a gruff good-bye, he parted from his host and hostess.

After a period of distraction and suffering, the Fentons and the Van Eycks settled back into the old life. Yvonne's room was kept ready for her, with all her small possessions put carefully away, her prayer-book and rosary lying where she had left them, on the table below the brown image of St. Antoine.



PART FOUR



WHAT THE WORLD BROUGHT

“Where Love is, there will I be also, said Fear.”
—*Landor.*

CHAPTER I

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

In the great vacancy that death leaves, Helen sat with Madge and Horace in the swept and garnished house at Orchardhurst. How pitifully silent it seemed, with the yellow leaves falling outside and the orange sun hanging like a lantern in the smoke-darkened sky! Forest fires had been raging, and the day was close and still. Never again would she hear the doctor's admonitory roar, as he watched Draper puttering about the currant bushes. No more his deep, burring monotone, pacing up and down the porch of a summer evening, and grandly mouthing to himself passages from his favorite Milton. The old gardener might burn all the pea-brush now and the little paths go unhoed all autumn.

It was a bitter emptiness, and still bitterer was the thought of her mother's room, untenanted by that gentle spirit. She who had been the center of life at Orchardhurst

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

had departed her way, leaving her children alone in the swept and garnished house, in the aching solitude of that lonely autumn.

"It almost seems," said Helen to Madge, "as if it could not be true. I think sometimes it is a horrible dream, and I shall wake and come downstairs in the morning to find them at the breakfast table just as I used."

Madge's grief was more for Helen than for her own loss. It seemed as if the very ground had been taken away from under Helen's feet. The crushing bereavement had followed so closely upon Yvonne's disappearance, and then Brockton, as soon as was decent, sooner than was kind, had drifted off to that limbo of aimless Bohemianism, abroad.

Orchardhurst was to be closed or sold and Helen was to go to her uncle, Benjamin Wylie, in the west.

It was better for her to live down her sorrow under new conditions, and there in her uncle's childless home her steady will soon asserted itself, and she resumed life, grave, it is true, and unbuoyant, but courageous for the future.

She fell to reading the serious authors

which she found in her uncle's well-stocked library. For, although a business man, he dabbled a little in books, and liked to show on his shelves such names as Mazzini, Conte, Spenser, Benjamin Kidd, and the Webbs. He was distinctly a capitalist, but if he had not been that he would surely have been a socialist. This sounds puerile, but nevertheless is true. It was through Mazzini that Helen found her way to Arnold House. She took a class and then her fate was sealed. She became a Fabian. There she heard of Willoughby, for the Arnold House people were his staunch adherents. She began to wonder how she would find him if she should meet him again. She realized that her point of view had changed since those days at Orchardhurst.

Willoughby and the Fentons made a pilgrimage that same year to La Jeune Vallette. Pierce could not get rid of the notion that Yvonne's cousin had something to do with her disappearance.

"The fellow has an iron will," he said, "and was bound that he would have Yvonne. And he exerted an influence over her which I could never understand."

"But," said Mrs. Fenton, "think of her

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

note. There seemed to be no coercion about that."

"One never can know," replied Willoughby. "She had heard from him the evening before her disappearance. Perhaps he had told her to meet him somewhere in the city."

"But he came to see us in person, Pierce, in answer to our letter sent to Vallette," argued Madge, "and was almost crazed over the news."

Pierce shook his head incredulously. Newspaper experience had taught him to open his eyes to the many possible solutions of a mystery.

"The letter may have been forwarded back to him in New York," he remarked, casually, "and the manner may have been assumed."

"We can easily find out at La Jeune Vallette where he was at that time," said Madge.

"Unless the family are in the conspiracy, too," added Fenton, who was almost converted to Willoughby's theory.

The visit to Yvonne's former home resulted in nothing. Poléon Gros-Louys was there, silent and moody. They saw him in

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

front of his cottage, making a canoe. They learned that he had been away when the letter reached Vallette, hunting, Madame said, somewhere in the woods. They had the letter sent to Chicoutimi, where they thought he might happen to stop on his way home. They could learn nothing from Gros-Louys himself, who only scowled and muttered when he was addressed. The neighbors said he had been like that ever since his return from hunting the winter before.

So they left the little village, huddled in picturesque confusion on its pine-circled upland, within sound of the rushing St. Gabriel. The bell was tolling for vespers in the Huron chapel as they went by, and the people were straggling in to service, like sheep dumbly following each other to the fold. Willoughby slipped away from the others and entered the chapel. In the narrow wooden pews the people knelt, grossly reverent, mumbling their prayers. The silver image of Our Lady looked benignly down on the altar-cloth, embroidered for her by the wicked ladies of Louis the Fifteenth's wicked court. The priest was intoning with his back to the people, and

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Yvonne's half-brother, in white surplice, held the tall candle up behind the chancel railing. There, kneeling and mumbling, with withered hands clasped, was the oldest woman in the village, with her blanket wrapped about her shoulders and falling in fringes over her baggy trousers below. And by her side was her husband, toothless and blind, his white locks strongly contrasted with his coppery, netted skin. On the floor, in front of their low bench, knelt her little half-brothers and sisters, a bright-eyed, nimble-tongued brood. Here Willoughby had sat with Yvonne, years ago, when she was in the innocence and charm of her untaught youth. Here she had knelt, in her red knit bodice and short skirt, and counted off the beads on her wooden rosary, black lashes hiding the brilliance of her eyes. Then Willoughby saw another picture—glow of candle-light and crimson of roses, a vision in yellow that smiles at him across a table.

Willoughby breathed a prayer for her safety and went out.

CHAPTER II

A RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

Valentino had at last been admitted to Benjamin Wylie's office.

"I reapersent the Dorsey Square Assoshation of Journeymen Tailors and Finishers," he began, in a pleasant tone, "and I have came to you as one of the biggest employers and perducers of tailor-made garments——"

Wylie looked steadily at the young man, noted the unkempt black hair falling over the dejected forehead and the full red lips, also the battered Derby hat and the tag of thread on the wrinkled velveteen waistcoat where the button should have been. Having, as he would have expressed it, sized the young man up, he began to scrutinize his own polished finger-nails, with gross inattention to the speaker. At the first break he was intending to dismiss him.

Valentino continued unabashed:

"——to s'licit your int'rurst and your infloonce in a matter which lays to the heart

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

of yourself and your employés and a large body of sufferin' poor."

He spoke with the volubility of a labor-union orator, the long words rhythmically surging up at intervals, like the seventh wave along an ocean shore. His illiteracy was of the cosmopolitan nature that characterizes the speech of the partially educated American public speaker. Only his liquid tones and mellow rolling r's betrayed his foreign origin.

"What do you want?" said Wylie, not lifting his eyes from his nails. "Charity, I suppose?"

"Not charity, Mr. Wylie. Justice."

A note of imperiousness in the stranger's voice made Wylie look at him.

Valentino returned the look with his large, glittering eyes, and repeated, rather melodramatically:

"Not charity, Mr. Wylie. Justice."

"Well?" said Wylie, sharply.

"You send out from these here cuttin'-rooms, Mr. Wylie, garments which your men finish in their homes. You make use to give them, also, to outside workers, as bastes and hems and presses them in the ten'ments where they live."

A RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

"You are a garment-worker?" Wylie interrupted.

"No. I am an ag'tator."

"You are paid by——"

"No one," Valentino interrupted. "I translate. I have worked on Labor Bureau Statistics. I keep myself so."

"You belong to some Union of inside finishers?"

"There aren't no such union," said Valentino.

"Explain yourself," said Wylie, with the curtness of capital to labor.

Valentino laid his faded brown Derby hat upon the floor and took from his pocket a mass of papers, foolscap sheets, pasted together in a long string.

"This here is a p'tition, signed by eight hundred and ninety-six fin'shers, to this following uffect: that you furnish inside shops, electric power, modern machines, and all that, for the op'rators on garments. This will remove off o' you the infamy uv under-payin' and overworkin' women and childrun. Your employés won't hev no more chance to kill theirselves slavin' fer you nights and a big number more who are out uv a job gets employment steady."

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

He unrolled the yards of names toward Mr. Wylie, who took up the soiled end gingerly between shapely finger tips.

"You labor agitators are never satisfied," said Mr. Wylie. "Is it not enough that I employ three hundred cutters and as many finishers and give them the best of facilities for their work? If they take garments home to finish, it is so much more money in their pockets."

"But ef you would hev give them work-room opportoonty, with machines and a plant all right, their lives 'ud not been threw away in the onwholesome ten'ments, strainin'——"

"But these outside workers," interrupted Mr. Wylie, with the magnanimity of one who accepts an argument thrust upon him, "are women and children who must work in their homes or not at all. You would not take the bread out of the mouths of helpless widows and orphans. It is such people who do my outside work during our busy season."

Wylie spoke with finality, and slid down the lid of his desk. Valentino rose, too, and his voice trembled.

"I'm not denyin' that leg power and

A RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

ten'ment labor is cheaper, but it is God's word I'm repeatin', that the laborer is worthy of his hire."

Wylie was slipping into his silk-lined overcoat.

"You are ratin' the gold uv one man to be higher then human lives. One woman, stitched to her grave; one laborer, hounded to pauperism, are worth more, a many fold, than the lucre you're losin' your soul for."

Valentino stood in the doorway that led from the merchant's private room to the outer office.

Wylie made no answer. He was indurated to reiteration and insistence.

Amasa Valentino pointed a lean, brown finger at him and raised his voice.

"Thus saith the Lord—I'll cause the ar-rrogancy of the pr-roud to cease."

The trilling of his r's was like a clarion herald's cry of battle.

"I'll make a man more pr-r-recious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir-r."

His limp collar was frayed at the edges, his waistcoat was unbuttoned and faded, his finger nails were dirty and untrimmed, but

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

at that moment he towered above the merchant and the merchant knew it.

The smooth-haired clerks who sat at their respective desks about the large office turned round and regarded Valentino with curiosity as he walked out into the wareroom.

Only a few days after this fruitless interview Valentino and Willoughby were walking together.

"So you spake the words of the Lord to him, like any modern Jeremiah?"

"I did," answered Valentino, "and found him as hardened as the Israelites of old."

His Protestant Piedmontese training made the young agitator a storehouse of Scriptural quotation.

Willoughby laughed a little, and then sighed.

"If you had asked me beforehand, Valentino, I should have told you not to attempt it. It is a waste of ammunition as yet. Mr. Wylie, to the world's thinking, is an upright, large-minded man, but, of course, in the Fabian way, unenlightened."

"I have enlightened him a little," said Valentino, in his child-like manner. "The darkness of Egypt was upon his face."

"It's a case of flesh-pots with all of them,

A RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

I fancy," mused Willoughby. "Well, the Monitor is going to make a fight against tenement labor. The sweat-shop law ought to be revised. Perhaps we can accomplish something in that line."

"With our present legislature?"

Valentino shrugged his shoulders incredulously.

"Mr. Willoughby!"

"Miss Van Eyck!"

Willoughby and Helen Van Eyck had met face to face upon the avenue.

"This is an agreeable surprise. You are making us a visit?"

"No, I have come to live. I am with my uncle, Mr. Wylie. You know we have given up Orchardhurst."

Her voice was a little uncertain. The unexpected sight of Willoughby had brought back that last happy year with her parents and the memory of beloved Yvonne.

Willoughby's eyes were misted as he held out his hand to her in silent sympathy.

After Valentino had been introduced, Helen told of her class at Arnold House, for which she was bound that afternoon.

"I, too," said Valentino. "May I join you, Miss Van Eyck?"

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Helen assented, somewhat stiffly.

The results of that afternoon were many.

"A few months ago," thought Helen, "how I should have wondered!"

That a man could dress like a mechanic and quote Mazzini! That a man could use bad grammar and be an intellectual stimulus to her! That he should be at his ease with her and she with him!

These were some of the things at which three months before she would have wondered. She was still new enough to Arnold House work to dwell on antitheses, so frequent as to be commonplace in a social settlement.

Valentino had also given her a new idea of Willoughby. She learned of his daily sacrifices and of his political valor. She began to realize that devotion to a cause may seem to an unsympathetic outsider like egotistic aggressiveness. She had a glimpse of his relations with the working class. She was too ignorant then to know how vital and simple those relations were.

"He's one of God's angels," Valentino had said, "with a head of iron and a heart of milk."

"If ever I done a good day's work it's this

A RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

one," said Valentino, coming into Willoughby's room late in the evening.

Willoughby raised his head from his desk to look at the young Italian.

"I've took Benjamin Wylie's niece about among Benjamin Wylie's hired laborer-rs."

"Where have you taken Miss Van Eyck?"

Willoughby's tone was almost stern.

"Oh, she didn't know them was her uncle's slaves. I didn't tell her. She had asked me to take her among some of my Italian families. So I did. I did."

Valentino's eyes glittered with exultation.

"She won't forget it in many a long day. We went to the Saranellis. I have told you about them, over the Jewish butcher shop in a rear tenement on Liberty Street. What a name that is, Willoughby! The Stars and Stripes 'ud blush to wave over that street. The Saranellis, you know, are nigh stitched to death a'ready. The child, Giulio, was dying on his bed, and the fine cloaks heaped above him."

The cold realism of Valentino's tone indicated pitiful familiarity with suffering, familiarity that bred self-repression, not indifference.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"You didn't take Miss Van Eyck into that hole?" Willoughby spoke more sternly.

"I did. What was good enough for her uncle's cloaks was good enough for her."

Valentino's face was uplifted.

"But I didn't tell her that. She only looked about and looked about, and put her handkerchief up to her eyes. I told her how late they worked, and what they was paid. She listened and looked. She didn't ask no questions, but her eyes was like the pit of wrath."

The two men sat silent for some time.

Then, "You will call upon Miss Van Eyck, sometime?" delicately, from Valentino.

"I think so."

"I didn't show her the half. She couldn't hev stood no more, poor-r young lady. Nor I didn't su'jest no rem'dy."

"You left that for me—I understand."

It was some time before Willoughby plunged into his work again that evening. His heart burned with the sense of impending possibilities.

When he called on Helen they had a long, long talk. She asked a great many questions, and he told her a great many things. Their hand-clasp when he left

A RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

meant that they were pledged to a common cause. There is nothing that will bring a man and woman more quickly together than to be pledged to a common cause.

"My uncle wants to meet you," said Helen to him the next time they met. "The Monitor represents a great deal that politically he's opposed to, of course, but he's interested in the things you say. I'm going to have you over to dinner next week, if you'll come. We're very commonplace and uninteresting after Bohemia, I know. But you will consent, won't you?"

"It will be a privilege, Miss Van Eyck."

"But you mustn't speak about—about It. I've been talking to him, and he's quite stirred up. He mustn't dream for a moment that he's being managed. It must be all his own initiative."

"I understand. And thank you, Miss Van Eyck."

Helen was delighted at the result of the acquaintance she brought about between her uncle and Pierce Willoughby. She was devoted to her uncle and valued his personal judgments. He conceived a great liking for Willoughby, and opposed as their views were, each admired the other.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"He's got a pretty clear head, that fellow," said Mr. Wylie, "and he's a man, straight through. You would never have expected it, with his opinions."

"You respect his opinions, too, uncle?" Helen asked, smiling. "They are part of him."

"I do, my dear, I do. If I were as free as he is, I might do differently—maybe, maybe."

"Why are you not free, Uncle Benjamin? With your money and your influence you might do so much."

"That's the trouble, Helen. My money ties me down. You don't understand "

He pulled his gray mustache thoughtfully. Helen sat closer to him and laid her hand affectionately in his. The seed she had planted had begun to grow.

"Let me understand, uncle," she said, gently. "Let us talk about things together."

As time went on, Willoughby learned more of Helen's needs and desires. She wanted to devote her life to serious ends and thought somewhat of journalism. She was clever with her pen and keen-witted enough to perceive the elements of a successful "story."

A RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

After she had done some apprentice work on special subjects, Willoughby made a place for her on the Monitor.

A deep and sincere nature that errs in judgment of another is apt to indulge in an almost expiatory admiration after that early judgment is reversed. It was somewhat so with Helen, as regards Pierce. This sense of her past injustice made her heart open more widely than would otherwise have been possible to the magnetic influence of Willoughby's strong and winning personality.

Helen sat in her room one evening reading, when she came upon a little newspaper slip between the pages of the book. It contained a wood-cut of Willoughby, taken from some western paper. Yvonne, long ago, had given it to her, half in fun, and underneath had written, "For Helen." Helen looked long and earnestly at the familiar features, firm and characteristic even in the wood-cut, and smiled at the inscription in Yvonne's Frenchy, irregular little hand, "For Helen." It set her to thinking, and while she was thinking, she smiled, unconsciously.

It was a gusty August night. The wind blew and the rain slapped against the win-

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

dow. And now Helen's thoughts turned to Yvonne. Strange little, half-real creature, slipped away so utterly out of her life. She took Verony's portrait and studied Yvonne's face. The Indian blood ran very faint in her, but Helen had always felt the inscrutable shadow of the forest in her eyes. The French laughter, gaiety and grace were what others saw.

"But you might as well seek your reflection in a waterfall as understand the soul in Yvonne," said to herself Helen. "Like a waterfall, she continually slips from you, foam and gleam atop, but underneath the compelling call of the sea."

Helen fell asleep and dreamed. She sat in the library of her country home. Her feet rested against the fender of the fireplace. The coals glowed in the grate. It was half-dark in the room, but the fire-light glinted here and there, touching a little table by the window where Yvonne's hat lay, the yellow straw hat with the black-eyed Susans around it. In the glass above the mantle Helen saw a man standing in the doorway. Softly he came forward. He saw the yellow hat and touched it with a sort of reverent amusement.

A RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

"Because it is Yvonne's," Helen thought, with a curious pull at her heart.

In the semi-light she was as yet unobserved. Then he walked slowly to the fireplace, Helen watching him in the glass. She felt his presence behind her.

"I will shut my eyes and seem asleep," she thought.

The delicious touch of finger-tips was on her temples, and a man's lips were pressed to her forehead. Then she began to awake.

"He thought I was Yvonne," she said, in the first stupor of transition from dream to reality. Again was that curious pull at her heart.

As consciousness cleared, she became aware that the face of the man in the glass was the face of Pierce Willoughby.

From this time on, harder than any other task that she performed was the task of concealing her love for Willoughby, a love which was both the joy and the pain of her life.

Manners are somewhat clipped in the west, and especially in a big newspaper house where every one is rushed for time and the spirit of merciless competition is

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

rife. No one, however, had ever failed to pay Miss Van Eyck her due of deference. She carried with her an atmosphere of gentle breeding which was felt even by pert office-boys and jaunty stenographers. The lily-like erectness of her carriage, which was her chief distinction, had its counterpart in her character. Fastidious without affectation, and proud without haughtiness, she went about her daily work, making few friends, no enemies.

A Dr. Shriver, one of their advertising agents, always seemed nettled by Helen's reserve. He was one of those men who must always be with every one on a familiar footing. With his great red cheeks, adorned by pendent, crinkly whiskers, his small eyes, gleaming with gross mirth, and his greasy waistcoat, unbuttoned over the portly stomach, he was the one person whom Helen dreaded to meet. He would, as he went by, compliment the women on their good looks and jocularly poke the men, his fat sides shaking with laughter.

Willoughby heard one day in Helen's office, adjoining his, the unctuous voice of Dr. Shriver.

"I wish the man would keep his place,"

A RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

he thought, knowing the discomfort Helen experienced in his presence.

A burst of laughter from the beef-eater was suddenly checked by something from Helen which he could not hear, and then her words came to him as her office door was opened.

"Good-day, Dr. Shriver. I must beg of you not to call again, as I shall always be too busy to see you."

Willoughby heard her clear, cutting tone, and felt the scorn which dilated her nostrils and flashed from her eyes.

The next moment Dr. Shriver was at his door. Willoughby wheeled round sharply in his chair, ready to rebuke the man severely if he had the chance, but Shriver spoke first. Raising his voice spitefully, he said:

"Tell your lady-love, Willoughby, she needn't be so d——d offish——"

"Out of here," roared Willoughby, aroused at the man's insult. He sprang from his chair and Dr. Shriver, like a cowed bully, shambled rapidly down the corridor.

"Don't you ever show your face in these offices again," he added, angrily, following him to the elevator.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Shriver muttered sheepishly about "some people who couldn't take a joke."

Willoughby went to explain matters to the "chief," and that day the Englishman lost his job.

Helen, leaving the office at five o'clock, passed Willoughby in the hall. She gave him a grateful smile as they bowed, and he noticed how flushed and tired she looked.

Not long after this was Memorial Day. Otto Pfeffer persuaded Willoughby to remit work for a few hours. He had arranged a *partie carrée* for the north shore. He had married, some time before, a little school-teacher, a rosy-cheeked young woman who had been a classmate of his at college. In marrying him she had married his philosophy as well. They kept house together on the dingy street, and while he visited his patients, she made friends with her polyglot neighbors or read Hegelian treatises in the barely-furnished front room. It was Otto's plan that Willoughby should invite Miss Van Eyck. He himself would be accompanied by his wife.

The woods on the bluff murmured soothingly. All about them under the trees the mandrake held up its little green umbrella

A RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

over its precious waxen bud. A few late violets were in bloom. The water stretched away, an iridescent sheet, rippling from amber-brown, pale green and pinkish-amethyst near the shore to deeper greens and blues and violet purple out toward the sky-line.

Helen had her Arnold with her. The Pfeffers had settled themselves some distance away. They had brought with them a bulky volume of Schopenhauer for light reading.

"It is not moonlight, but let us have Dover Beach," said Willoughby.

He ensconced himself comfortably against a tree. Helen read. As she turned a leaf a scrap of paper fluttered to the ground. It was the wood-cut, with Yvonne's inscription. Pierce put out his hand to catch it.

"Don't! Give it to me!" Helen cried, quickly. Her dream was vivid in her mind.

A second after she could have bitten the tongue out of her head for those words. For, as she spoke, Willoughby, looking at it, read aloud the brief inscription and turned to her with a smile and a casual remark upon his lips. Poor Helen! Somehow, she had lost hold of herself, and she knew it. As

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

her eyes met his they told her story. Nothing that might happen could alter it. Willoughby was keener-visioned in such matters than he had been years ago. A simple look had laid her soul bare. Her scarlet cheeks were unwilling witness to the betrayal. Willoughby was glad for her that no third person was present.

"You read," she said, abruptly handing him the book.

He took it gravely, not looking at her, and read on without interruption till the Pfeffers rejoined them. As for Helen, she was like one who sees the springs where her life rose and the sea where it goes.

Helen's aunt, Mrs. Wylie, was at home just then for one of her brief visits. She was one of those globe-trotting women whose health requires a different climate for every season of the year. Disapproving much of Helen's serious tendencies, she looked her over critically.

"Your eyes are too large, my dear, and your hands tremble. You had better drop this beastly scribbling of yours, and go with me to Norway this summer."

"I think it is only a change of work I need," replied Helen. "Perhaps I had

A RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

better consider Mr. Hathaway's offer," she turned to her uncle, "and do the reviewing for his magazine. The hours would not be so long nor the office-routine so exacting."

With no weak longing nor despair she set her face toward the future. For time will bring opiate of forgetfulness, and life will bring tonic of labor.

CHAPTER III

CONSUMMATION

"I think that I must abide by my decision," said Helen, looking, as she spoke, at the glass paper-weight on Willoughby's desk.

"We will ease up the work for you, Miss Van Eyck. We will get some one else to take the current notes. You may arrange your office-hours to suit yourself."

"What an ugly one!" thought Helen, still looking at the paper-weight. "I wonder if he has no better."

"We would do a great deal to keep you with us. We consider your work valuable."

"You are kind, Mr. Willoughby." Helen had raised her eyes to his watch-chain, and was counting the links. "It is not merely that the work is too taxing."

"If there is any other department——"

"No, no. I should not wish you to make any change——"

She raised her eyes to his cravat, and decided that he had tied it himself.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"I do not urge you for our sake alone, Miss Van Eyck. Whatever is best for yourself, of course——"

Willoughby was interested in her literary success, and felt that the change she contemplated would be a misstep for her.

Helen was grateful for the dryness of his advice.

"If you would take the week's vacation, Miss Van Eyck, which you so much need, and during that time leave the matter open, we should be obliged to you."

Helen raised her eyes to his face.

"I will do so," she replied, hating herself for her weakness.

Willoughby, in the courteous fashion that he had, accompanied her to the elevator.

"He's an awful nice man, don't you think so?" graciously remarked Miss Donahue, a stenographer, as they descended together.

"He seems kinder young, but he's a smart writer, and a regular dude fer politeness."

The place seemed sordid without Miss Van Eyck. Willoughby missed his frequent contact with her mind. He learned how much he had been relying on her quick, clear judgments and sympathetic analyses.

"We must get her back," he thought, as

CONSUMMATION

he read the tamer copy that her substitute sent in.

When her week's vacation lengthened to two he found that he missed something besides her judgments and analyses. He missed her.

When Helen learned of her uncle's final determination to furnish inside work-rooms for the finishing of his custom-made garments, her heart leaped with joy. It was a forward step in industrial progress.

If, through her instrumentality, in even a small degree, it had been effected—how Amasa Valentino's eyes would glow and his voice would thrill! Pierce Willoughby also—she tried to repress a too personal emotion at the thought of the pleasure he would feel.

She sent a special messenger inviting them both to dinner that evening.

"I have a piece of good news for you," she added in her note.

Willoughby, on account of the invitation, returned from the office earlier than usual. He stepped across the hall to Valentino's room. Valentino, in his shirt-sleeves and stocking-feet, was standing over his little oil-stove, stewing some dried tomatoes.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"We are bid out to dinner, Valentino," said Willoughby, "with Benjamin Wylie." There was an unusual light in his eyes.

Valentino turned round, the iron spoon in his hand. He understood the "we" in its editorial sense. He waved the spoon ironically:

"You go to sup with princes and potentates," he replied. "It is well."

"Miss Van Eyck has invited us both. She says she has some good news for us. You will go?"

Valentino stooped and picked up a shoe from under the bed. It was rusty-red color, and the sole was half gone. He laid it down and held up the other. It was cracked and split across the uppers.

"My gala best," he said, calmly. "Present my excuses. Tell her I have a previous engagement, a date with the Conto di Raggedo Boota. That is myself."

"Come," said Willoughby. "The shoes can be blacked. They will pass muster."

"There are other engagements," pursued Valentino, pointing to his frayed and faded coat that hung upon the wall, "with the Barono di Tatterda Coata. No, my friend, it is impossible. I cannot condescend to go.

CONSUMMATION

I am too proud to wear my insignia among the ignorant. Addio."

Willoughby and Helen sat before the open fire in the library. It was a chilly June evening. It was not seven o'clock, and Mr. Wylie had not yet returned from town. Mrs. Wylie, upstairs, was making her usual elaborate dinner-toilette. Helen unfolded to Willoughby her uncle's plans, while the firelight played on her thin, delicate face. Her expression was almost etherealized. Pierce, as he watched and listened, felt steal over him a tranquil sense of solitude à deux, and perfect harmony with one's companion. He looked at Helen with new eyes, and decided that she was the woman.

When dinner was announced much had happened between them. It was a very happy dinner for them both. Mr. Wylie seemed nobler and larger-hearted than he had ever seemed before. Mrs. Wylie, even, was less frivolous and worldly-minded than had been her wont.

They had a few moments alone with Mr. Wylie before Willoughby left. Willoughby told Helen's uncle of the promise his niece had given him.

Benjamin Wylie put a hand upon the

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

shoulder of each. "My daughter and my son," he said, tenderly.

Willoughby stood over Valentino's bed at eleven o'clock that night. He told him first the gospel of the workshop. He ended with the gospel of the heart.

Valentino sprang up and embraced him.

"Let us give thanksgiving together and make a solemn sound," he cried.

"Not too solemn a sound, though," said Willoughby, "the Bohemian woman beneath has a sick baby."

"And will you bring her over here to live," asked the Italian, "*à la modo Pfefferino?*"

CHAPTER IV

THE CLEAR FOUNTAIN

“You just lay down a bit, dearie, and rest yoursel’,” said the woman, “while I run out and fetch a jug of milk and some marmalade for our tea.”

The girl lay down wearily upon the carpet-covered sofa, and scrutinized for the hundredth time the print of Queen Victoria and the lithograph of Derby Day, that hung upon the wall.

“Has Minchins come again with that bill for the dress?” asked the girl, when the woman returned.

“Never you mind if ’e ’as, the nasty thing. ’E can wait till the h’end of the week. ’E won’t go starvin’. You’ll be getting your wage by a Saturday, won’t you?”

The girl nodded.

“An’ you did fine, this h’afternoon. Cur-rant, that’s my sister’s ’usband, ’e says, ‘She’s gettin’ to ’andle ’er legs better’ (hex-cusin’ the disrespec’ to you, dear, ’e don’t mean naught). They giv’ you a good call-back last night, too. You’re dark, but

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

good-lookin', when you're made-up, in particular——"

"Tell me, Eliza, am I dark, too dark for an English girl—like an Indian or a gypsy?"

"Laws, no. They be poor critters, as can't talk h'English."

There was silence for a few moments, while the woman bustled about the room preparing tea.

"Mr. Brockton was 'ere to see you this morning. 'Ere's 'is bloomin' pasteboard. But I wouldn't waken you, becuz you was sleepin' sweet as a baby."

"I'm glad you didn't, Eliza. He knows I don't wish to see him."

"I didn't like the looks of 'im, not at all. 'E 'ad the smell of drink on 'im, an' 'e 'andled 'is sovereigns too free. There dassn't none o' them fine gentry come palaverin' round me or I'll show 'em the way h'out, double-quick, too. Currant, 'e knows 'ow to deal with such trash. 'E's got a wrist like a h'ox's."

"Eliza, dear, tell me, shall I ever, ever be a great actress? Shall I be even as good as Bella Percy? Answer me truly," the girl asked, after a pause. "Am I as good as Bella Percy, for instance?"

THE CLEAR FOUNTAIN

"No, dearie, I can't just say you're as good as Bella Percy. Not so catchy-like, you might say. She don't mind if a fellow gives her a smack on the cheek, after the curtain drops. That's what Currant, 'e says. An' she tips 'em all the wink, the hussy. But they likes it, they does. Let me show you, Miss, 'ow you must do. I've been goin' to them music-'alls now fifteen years excep' for the time I was in the States, an' I knows all their tricks."

She lifted her skirt, displaying her clumsy ankles in their unbleached cotton stockings.

"My legs ain't as good as yours, but I'll just give you a taste of the h'idea. You throws your foot h'out so, an' you kicks 'igh—'igher than that. It's h'all in my head, but I can't just do it with my feet. They're contrary. Then you cocks your pretty 'cad to one side an' looks knowin' an' sings it so."

It would have been whimsical were it not pathetic, to see the thick-set middle-aged woman trying to instruct the black-eyed girl in the art of vaudeville.

"The trouble is," said the girl, rising impetuously and letting an unregarded sofa-pillow fall on the floor behind her, "I don't

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

want to do it. I could do it well, but I don't want to."

The woman quietly picked up the pillow.

"You're above it, dear," she said. "That's my h'understandin' of it. I can see it in your face while you stand there a-singin'. You looks at the beer-mugs, an' the smoke, an' all the togged-out girls there from the East End, and then, just as you is goin' to let yourself h'out an' all the men is ready to clap you, you draws back into your shell an' it flats out."

"It's not what I was meant for," cried the girl, passionately. "But when I play in Marianne—Mr. Barry is using his influence to get me in with the Druid Company—then, I will put my whole soul into it. My whole soul!"

The girl ended almost with a sob. She went to the window, and stood with her back to the woman, looking out into the street. When she turned round, there were tears in her eyes.

"Little Hilaire will be eight years old to-day," she said, "and think of it! He was only a baby when I left. And Ernestine, she may be married by this time. They have all forgotten me, even maman, for she has

THE CLEAR FOUNTAIN

her other little ones. They have all forgotten me."

The girl repeated it wistfully.

"All except my cousin. He will never forget. My poor cousin."

She buried her face in her hands.

"Laws, dearie, don't take on so."

The girl pushed away the comforting hand and rose to her feet with a strange upward gesture of her arms. She seemed as a bird with clipped wings that vainly attempts to fly.

"Poléon, I am² coming!" she screamed. "I hear you calling me. I will come. A-ah——"

"What is it, dearie? 'Ave you got a pain to your stummick? Take a few draps of this cordial. 'Twas a shillin' a bottle. It's sure to be fine."

"I am going to my people—I am going to Poléon." The girl turned fiercely upon the woman.

"Straight away, Miss?" said the woman, soothingly. "But you 'aven't the money to go to Polong."

"Wait a minute. I will sing them a French song to-night. Be quiet! It will come to me in a moment. Hush! Now I have it. Listen!"

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

The girl stood still, gaze fixed on the pastry-shop sign across the street. She saw the plumes of a pine-tree waving darkly against a blue sky. The sound of a distant waterfall came to her ears, mixed with the laughter of children.

She sang. The soul of the waterfall was in her voice, wild, mysterious, unearthly:

“A la claire fontaine
M'en allant promener
J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle,
Que je m'y suis baigné
Lui ya long temps que je t'aime,
Jamais je ne t'oublierai.”

The melody is heart-breaking.



“Jamais je ne t'oublierai,”
the girl sang over.

The woman sat on the sofa, her apron up to her eyes. The girl sang on with the look

THE CLEAR FOUNTAIN

of a star-gazer on her face. She was deaf to her own voice. In the humble little room, it floated like a living thing.

“Sous les feuilles d’un chêne
Je me suis fait sécher,
Sur la plus haute branche
Le rossignol chantait.
Lui ya long temps que je t’aime,
Jamais je ne t’oublierai.”

The singing voice soared up. The ceiling became the sky, and there was infinite space within the four walls of the room.

“Sur la plus haute branche
Le rossignol chantait
Chante, rossignol, chante,
Toi qui as le coeur gai.
Lui ya long temps que je t’aime,
Jamais je ne t’oublierai.”

The woman rocked back and forth on the sofa, weeping. The voice cleft its way once more through upper air, a lost bird seeking for its mate. Exquisite despair poured forth like wine from a broken goblet.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

“Chante, rossignol, chante,
Toi qui as le coeur gai,
Tu as le coeur à rire,
Moi, je l'ai-t-à pleurer.
Lui ya long temps que je t'aime.
Jamais je ne t'oublierai.”

The spent voice drifted downward. That wistfullest of all songs ebbed out like a sobbing tide upon the shore.



“You do be breakin’ my ’eart, Miss Yvonne,” said the woman, shamefacedly mopping her eyes.

“But h’it’s enough to make a cow cry. If they don’t be all beasts at the ’all to-night, you’ll bring down the ’ouse as sure as my name’s Eliza Blodgett.”

The woman, since she had left service, had relapsed into the Cockneyism in which she had been bred.

“The voice of you when you sang that

THE CLEAR FOUNTAIN

'long-tong'! It went right to my 'ead like a glass of spirits."

A feverish flush had overspread Yvonne's face. The woman drew her down beside her on the sofa, and laid her cool hard palm upon the girl's hot forehead.

"You 'ave het yourself all h'up, dearie. Now set down an' 'ave a dish of tea an' a bit of bun. You'll be a-coolin' while you're a-h'eatin'."

CHAPTER V

AN APRIL MIRACLE

It was April, but still winter in La Jeune Vallette. The snow lay white on the open spaces of the Laurentian hills, and gleamed between the dark trunks on its forest-clad slopes. In the meadows of the habitans the brown grasses flecked here and there the white mantle of snow, and by the many fences bounding their long, narrow fields the everlasting flowers barely pushed up their downy heads, yellow above the blue-white snow. "For as high as the everlasting flowers grow in summer, so high will the snow be in winter," was a saying among the housewives on the Chateaubourg road.

The rapids of the St. Gabriel fell in a tenuous stream between contorted walls of ice.

Aubin St. Clair drove his little traineau briskly along the creaking road from Ancienne Vallette to his own house, le Maison du Roi. It was the oldest dwelling-house in the neighborhood, and had retained

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

its name ever since the days when Canada had belonged to France and France had a king and le Capitaine had commanded the block-house, which, on account of its military character, was called by the simple folk "Le Maison du Roi."

Aubin was muffled up to the ears in a bear-skin coat out of which his round, red face, white-fringed, showed like the rising harvest moon.

Poléon Gros-Louys slouched along the road in a moose-skin coat, much worn. A rabbit's bushy tail hung limply from one of the capacious pockets.

"Stop, you beasts!" called Aubin, in a cheerful growl, to his dogs. "Good-day, neighbor. How goes it?"

Aubin was one of the few French habitans who would stop to exchange civilities with the people of the Huron village.

"So-so," muttered Poléon, "I've been in the bush cutting wood."

"There's a good bit of snow on the mountains yet, I imagine," returned the other, "but about here promises a big thaw soon."

He looked at his dogs, from whose shaggy sides the steam was rising. They snapped at each other playfully.

AN APRIL MIRACLE

"It's up to one's waist where the blueberries grow," returned Poléon, beginning to pass on.

He had been, for him, unusually loquacious.

"But how are all your people?" called Aubin.

"Is Ernestine still at the *Sacrè Coeur*? What an amiable young girl that is! And Auguste, is he learning well to cut the moccasins?"

Aubin's solitary yellow tooth in his wide-apart mouth, gave him a look of simple good-heartedness that even Gros-Louys could not resist.

He answered Aubin's inquiries briefly.

"But Yvonne? How fares she? Do you get news of her since she left the Americans there? Ah, that is a sad thing, Poléon. Keep up a brave heart, man. The good God may yet send her to you. Look here."

The old man reached down into a pocket and brought out a Quebec paper, a rarity in those parts.

"*Ecoutez!* What I read this morning—'A young girl, who had been stolen away from her home in Maine, two years ago, and had not been heard from since, has reappeared.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Her mother had gone to pray for her in the church, and had devoted an offering to the Virgin Mary. When she returned her daughter stood in the doorway of her house. The young girl seemed dazed, and could tell nothing of her journey back to her home. It was without doubt through the direct intervention of the blessed Mary! ”

Poléon listened doggedly. He was not so religious as the people about him. The little tale did not send the thrill through him that it did through old Aubin.

“Yes, yes,” he said. “It was in Maine. Things may happen in Maine which never come to Vallette.”

“Take the paper,” said Aubin, kindly, thrusting it into his hand. “It may bring you comfort. Au revoir——”

“Marchez donc,” he said to his dogs, who yelped and flourished their black tails with eagerness to start.

Poléon took the paper and looked at it with eyes unaccustomed to letters. When he came to the sudden turn by the chapel that leads to the straggling streets of La Jeune Vallette, he sat down in the sun on the steps of the church.

He spread the paper out awkwardly on his

AN APRIL MIRACLE

knees, and scanned it. The printed words were like so many hieroglyphics to him, but he would not have had old Aubin know with how much difficulty he read. He selected one item and began to spell it out laboriously. He spelled along as far as the name Yvonne.

"Y-v-o-n-n-e," he went over the letters again, in great excitement.

"Who knows," he said, "but this may tell about her? I will take it to the Abbé St. Clair and let him read it to me."

He went on rapidly down the road, across the bridge, around the curve by the old saw-mill, and then with long, loping strides he descended the deep hill to the great gray stone church and the priest's home.

The Abbé St. Clair lived the life of a recluse in his immaculate house, with its trim French garden. He was content with his secluded parish because it gave him time for study and immunity from care. He came to the door at Poléon's knock, a finger keeping the place in the Latin book which he held in his hand.

"Enter, Poléon," he said, regarding him with the abstracted look that seldom left his eyes.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

He took him to his study.

"Read it, please," said Poléon, handing him the paper and putting his finger on the item.

The Abbé read:

"Report has it that a well-known English novelist is writing a play for Mdlle. Yvonne Yriarte. It deals with a French-Indian legend current in lower Canada."

"It is she, it is she!" exclaimed Poléon, his excitement knowing no bounds. "It is our Yvonne, father. Lower Canada—French-Indian. Now we shall find her. I will go and bring her back."

"This is dated from Paris," said the Abbé, "and Yvonne is an actress."

"What does she do then, father?"

"She plays, perhaps dances, in theaters, for the amusement of all the world. It is a dangerous pastime."

"Father, how does one go to Paris?"

"'Tis a difficult journey," said the Abbé, "a long journey. You love Yvonne, you have never been happy since she left."

The Abbé took off his spectacles, which had become misty, and wiped them on his fine linen handkerchief.

AN APRIL MIRACLE

"I dream of her at night, father. One is lonely without her."

"A winsome, black-eyed creature," said the Abbé, reflectively. "The sisters at the Convent du Sacré Coeur spoke highly of her. I fear she has gone astray. The church would gladly help reclaim her to its bosom."

"I would go with you, son," he said. "I have long thought of going across the sea—Rome, Paris. The Abbé Clément has seen them, why not I? But it costs dear."

He spread out his empty hands expressively. "And you?"

"I have enough, enough," answered Poléon.

"I will think this over," said the Abbé. "Who knows but we may go abroad together, you, my son, and I?"

His thin, white fingers closed warmly about the large dark hand of the Indian hunter.

"God speed you," he repeated, "and grant that you may find your little Yvonne."

"She is Dew-of-the-Morning," said Poléon. "She is Dew-of-the-Morning, and when the dew dries up, the flowers hang their heads."

CHAPTER VI

ANOTHER RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

Two men sat side by side in the stalls of a London theater. One was rather a striking figure, slender, well-knit, a slight forward inclination of the shoulders, as of one who bends much over a desk, his hair a little silvered at the temples, a firmly-featured face, clean-shaven, the boyish candor of the blue eyes contrasted with the sad fixity of the mouth. The other man was of the pink-necked, thick-chested British type. His full lips and heavy chin were offset by a finely-modeled forehead and shrewd gray-blue eyes.

"If you run down to Purple-Tops," said the latter, "I'll show you some of our cross-country riding. You ride to hounds over there, I fancy?"

His "over there" had the polite vagueness of an Englishman who has never visited America, and never intends to.

"Not much in the middle west, where I have lived. There's a hyphenated fellow or

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

two who goes into it, but the rest of us don't have time."

Oglethorpe was compassionately silent. He was feeling for common ground with this Willoughby, whose last book, "The Fate of an Ideal," had been so successful in England. Oglethorpe was by profession both author and playwright, but he had a singular objection to identifying himself with the literary clique. He was even somewhat aggressive in flaunting his other interests and shunning altogether "chatter about Shelley."

"If you go farther west, though, into the Rockies," Willoughby went on, filling up the gap of his companion's silence, "you will find big shooting—elks, moose and bear."

"By George!" exclaimed Oglethorpe, regaining interest in the American, "you have a box out there and go often?"

"I worked a ranch one summer, while I was still in the university, and did some hunting, but never since. The hunting about Chicago is more exciting."

"Really!" exclaimed the Englishman.

Then the play began. A little servant-maid was one of the cast, taking rather a prominent part.

ANOTHER RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

"Now that's a clever piece of acting!" said Oglethorpe, after one of her exits.

He was not looking at Willoughby, and would not, in the obscurity, have noticed how the program in his hand shook.

"Who is she?" Willoughby asked.

"Yvonne Yriarte. She's been in vaudeville till now. This is her first attempt in legitimate drama. Tom Barry's back of her, I believe."

"She's—she's been in London long?"

"Really, he is warming up," thought the Englishman, rejoicing that, at last, he had struck common ground.

"I don't know. I'll take you round to her after the play, if you like. I know her fairly well. She's a clever little thing, and quite charming, off the stage."

Willoughby was wrapped in the play again. He did not notice the acting. Rachel might have been on the boards and he would not have seen her. The little servant-maid, with her adorable accent, he followed. She had the same voice that had thrilled through the Bois-des-Erables.

They made their way to the green-room after the play. She was standing with her back to him when he entered the room. A

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

stout woman was wrapping her up in her cloak. Two or three men were already there. Hearing Willoughby's steps, she turned round. With a gesture of delight, she let her cloak fall backward to the floor, and running up to him she put her hands on his shoulders and kissed him on the cheek.

"My good friend!" she exclaimed.

It was as simple and natural as a child's action, and having done it, she was no more embarrassed than a child. She looked round toward the others.

"He was my good friend long ago," she said, "and first taught me what life was. Why don't you congratulate me, Pierce?"

"I—will—I do——" stammered Willoughby.

He began to realize the situation and the cool scrutiny of the men.

"I must see you to-morrow, Yvonne."

"You are going to reproach me, I know," she answered, "but I want much to see you."

She named her street and the number.

Pierce went to his room for a night of fevered dreams. From the moment that Yvonne's lips had touched his cheek the old spell began to bind itself anew about his

ANOTHER RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

heart. He had no thought of being untrue to Helen. He did not think of her at all.

Willoughby found his way to the queer little street off Tottenham Court Road. In the stuffy sitting-room, as he sat and waited for Yvonne, he noticed the hideous carpet and threadbare sofa.

Yvonne had lost her airy manner of the night before. He noticed the shadows under her eyes and the wan look of her mouth.

"She has suffered and fought, and perhaps—not conquered," he said to himself.

His heart went out to her in her defeat.

She answered his questions gravely, giving him her history since she had left New York with Eliza Blodgett.

"It seemed that I must go in that way," she said. "Madge would not have permitted it, and my cousin would have come for me if he had known where I was."

"It must have been hard for you," said Pierce. "It was hard for us."

She did not answer. Then:

"I have been waiting till—till there was something worth telling before I wrote to my friends. I have not written yet."

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

She held her hands tightly clasped in her lap and looked down.

"Your friends will be—glad—" there was intensity in the commonplace adjective—"glad to hear from you."

"I shall write to them after the tenth," said Yvonne.

She looked at Willoughby with a deep smile in her black eyes.

"Something will have happened then," she went on, mysteriously, "worth the telling."

She sat there smiling and silent, the inward glow of a great secret upon her face.

Willoughby told of his visit to Vallette, while Yvonne turned aside to hide her tears.

"But now let me hear of yourself," she said, "and of all my friends."

So he told her of the Fentons, and of the baby boy who prattled in their home; of sweet Elizabeth Dawson's sickness and death; of Cornelia Livingston's marriage.

"And the Van Eycks," he began, choosing the words in which to tell her of the change at Orchardhurst.

"I know. It is so very sad," she exclaimed. "Brockton has told me. Yes, I have seen him, but not often."

They were quiet together, for of Brockton

ANOTHER RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE

she could say no more. Willoughby, from contempt of a man lost to all sense of personal and family honor, kept sternly silent.

"How lonely for dear Helen!"

Yvonne's words came to him with a shock. He went on to speak of Helen's home in the west, of her uncle, of the Monitor. He began to tell of their engagement, but the words were like knife-points in his throat. So he told of other things.

"I am rejoiced Helen has found her work," Yvonne said. "Tel bel esprit. And it has been my great hope, Pierce, that you and she might learn to know each other."

"We—we——" stammered Willoughby. Then the Evil Angel, who comes at least once in a lifetime between us and Opportunity, stepped in and laid her finger on his lips.

"We are very good friends."

If he had finished his sentence as he had begun it, another would have been saved, how much suffering, and he, how much remorse!

PART FIVE



THE LADY OF THE FLAG FLOWERS

“Je dirais au roi Henri
J'aime mieux ma mie
Au gué,
J'aime mieux ma mie.”

—*Vielle Chanson.*

CHAPTER I

BEFORE THE TENTH

"What! You, Yvonne?"

"Assuredly."

"I thought so. You're not in haste?"

"I am, Brockton."

"It's a sin. Haste makes waste. Sit down here a bit in the square. I have the key in my pocket. It's very necessary that I should talk with you."

"But impossible. I must get home."

"May I walk with you, then? Let me carry the fish."

"How did you know?"

"Some men are born to knowledge, and others have it thrust upon them. Let me take them."

"What gallantry! I can't fancy you carrying a brown paper parcel."

"It shan't be a matter of fancy, but fact."

"There, if you will. But don't keep me standing here, with that goggle-eyed man staring at us. Let us sit down."

"As I suggested at the start."

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Well, Brockton, what do you want?"

"You."

"Same old——"

"Don't revile yourself, Yvonne."

"Seriously, Brockton, I must say what I've said before. You're really quite decent this morning, and I wish you to understand me. I shall never give you the answer you want."

"Why?"

"Because—it doesn't sound pretty to say it—because I don't want you."

"If you smile at me like that I shall go crazy."

"I'll look like this, then, if you prefer."

"No, never. I didn't mean what I said. You have frowned on me so much lately, you know, that it quite upset me to have you smile."

"Well?"

"What was I saying? See how strange that man looks there, laughing at us through the trees!"

"Where?"

"There, deuce take it—I beg your pardon."

"I see nothing, Brockton."

"Neither do I, now. It was a streak across my eyes. Yvonne."

"Yes."

BEFORE THE TENTH

"You're having the deuce of a time, you know you are. Why won't you let me help you? Carrying home dried herring like any lodging-house slavey."

"I'm thankful to have dried herring to carry."

"If you'll only have me, you may buy a whole herring-fishery. I've money to burn, and I'm going to the dogs with it as fast as I can—without you."

"But I don't want to go there, even with you, Brockton."

"Yvonne! I could be a man, if you would help me."

"Brockton, be a man first! Take hold of yourself."

"I'm not on speaking terms with myself. We're continually at odds. But if you were interested, it would be all different. Think of what we could do, where we could go. Are you happy, Yvonne?"

"No, not now. But It is coming."

"What is coming?"

"I can't tell you what. A piece of good news. Then I shall be happier. Then I shall be satisfied to return."

"Where, pray?"

"To my people."

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Must it be a secret, this piece of good news?"

"From you."

"Alone?"

"No."

"It concerns besides yourself a—a—man?"

"Perhaps, but it's not—not——"

"It isn't?"

"No."

"Not so bad a piece of good news as I feared. Will you ever tell me?"

"After the tenth, if I see you."

"I will see you—after the tenth, then. I shall remember. Ah, don't go—Yvonne, won't you have me? You would have taken me once, wouldn't you? That time, you remember?"

"I remember."

"Would you?"

"Maybe. But now——"

"Bloomin' fool that I was!"

"Brockton, don't look at me so wildly. What do you see?"

"Nothing. I did see—something. It's gone now, flown away. What were we talking of? Oh, you."

"Brockton, I am sorry. I am very sorry."

BEFORE THE TENTH

"You can't be half sorry enough for a poor devil like me. If you only knew——"

"If you only knew. We have each of us our trouble. We must fight it out alone. And the Great God understands."

"There is no hope for me?"

"Good-bye."

"You mean it?"

"Yes, good-bye."

"By George, then, I was bad enough before, but I'll be worse now. There's nothing left to live for. What rot it all is!"

He dug his stick into the ground with an ugly oath, and watched Yvonne's little figure, as she walked away down the street, carrying her brown paper parcel.



CHAPTER II

JANGLING VOICES

He sat alone in his chamber, and heard jangling voices.

"You are doing no wrong to visit her," cried One. "You are interested in her welfare. She needs your friendship."

"You are more than interested," said the Other. "You should leave London and not see her again."

"That would be an admission of cowardice," said the One. "Stay and follow your own innocent fancy. The time will come soon enough when duty will command you. You are sick. You need the relaxation."

"Nothing can require a moral relaxation," said the Other. "The more you give way to it the stronger this passion will become. You know it is not a true, right love. You are bound to another. Think of her."

"She is far away. She will never know. And if she should know, she would not be troubled. Yvonne is her friend, too."

"What are you wasting your time and

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

your heart-beats for? Nothing. She cares no more for you than for the fellow-actors with whom she plays at love and hate. When all is said and done, what have you? Indifference here, contempt there and remorse in your own heart."

Daily Sin and Conscience fought this battle, and the man within whom Sin and Conscience do daily battle becomes worn with eternal hearing of their jangling voices.

"End it all and write to Helen," said the Other.

Willoughby took up his pen.

"My dearest," it wrote.

"What beautiful sincerity!" sneered the One.

Willoughby threw down his pen. "I cannot write to her," he savagely said.

"To write to her as I have been doing is falsehood."

"Ah, then you know you are false," the jangling voices began again.

"Admit it," quickly interrupted the One. "Many men have been so. You might be much worse than to be false.

"But why need it be false? You have simply found your mistake. Better now than afterwards. More merciful for both

JANGLING VOICES

you and Helen. Win Yvonne. Helen would not wish the semblance of your love without the reality. You are only just to her in following your own heart."

"False, false, false!" And so the jangling voices went on.

Far away in a western city Helen Van Eyck sat before her desk.

"It is two weeks that I have not heard from him," she was saying to herself.

Yvonne's letter lay before her on her desk. The thought of her own unanswered one to Pierce lay heavy on her heart. For the twentieth time that day she took the calendar in her hand and counted off the days since her letter had been posted. For the twentieth time that day she came to the same conclusion. His copy came to the office with unfailing regularity. And he had seen Yvonne!

Her love and her pride fought with each other. Her nature was the kind that cannot endure uncertainties. It must have finality. Stronger than most women in bearing the irrevocable, she was weaker than many in enduring suspense. She loved Willoughby, but her strong will made her heart renounce its hope. She still believed

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

in him too much not to love him. She still loved him too much to be bitter. But she determined to write a letter to him which should release him from his engagement.

There could be but one reason for his silence. He had met Yvonne. His love for her had returned. Doubtful how to unravel the complication, honesty keeps him silent both to her and Yvonne. Helen did not blame him at all; rather herself that she had accepted him, knowing his past love for Yvonne.

This was the letter she wrote:

“My Dear Pierce:

“In our absence from each other of the last few months, we have perhaps learned to know our own hearts better.

“I sometimes think that a lifelong union needs a lifelong preparation. However that may be, I have decided that our engagement was a mistake. Much as I honor you and esteem you——”

Helen set her teeth as she wrote this, and after she had written it she laid her head down upon the table and sobbed.

“——I cannot marry you. It is foolish to ask or to offer reasons for a decision like this. The decision alone is reason enough. I know that you are both generous and

JANGLING VOICES

wise, and will ask neither for explanation nor change. There can be none of either.

"But I shall remain always,

"Your friend,

"Helen Van Eyck."

She read the letter over with dry, burning eyes.

"When he has this," she said, "he will not blame himself any more. Of course I could not pretend that I still thought he loved me. But he will think that the misunderstanding and mistake have been mutual—and he will be happy."

Then: "Oh, Pierce, Pierce!" she moaned.

Perhaps the thought came to her, as it will again and again to loving women, that her recreant lover might, after all, return

After a while she lifted her head from her desk and wrote another letter, different from the previous one. But when she had completed it, she tore it up and sent the first.

Then she took from her drawer a packet of Willoughby's letters. Very dear they had been to her. Every page and every line had brought joy.

Her lips twitched.

"I mustn't have these things lying around," she said.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

She crumpled them, one by one, in her hands, and threw them into the empty grate. She wondered at herself for the trouble she was taking.

"Quite as if I were building a fire," she said ironically, as she touched the match.

The papers writhed and curled as the flames crept round them. They huddled together or recoiled as the light gusts from the chimney chased them. They seemed to be shuddering at their own fate. One particular sheet Helen watched. It had a will of its own and fought the enemy heroically. Slowly they encroached upon its fairness. They licked away with their red tongues the written lines that picketed its territory. Now the heap of papers below it fell into charred, glossy scraps. On the blackened leaf that Helen watched one patch of whiteness remained. Leaning over, she could read the words: "I am eagerly waiting—" She put out her hand to rescue it, but a little leaping scorpion frustrated her purpose. There was nothing else left to satisfy the fire. Fire and letter perished together. The black ashes quivered in the grate.

"In a moment they will be as quiet as I," said Helen.

CHAPTER III

WILLOUGHBY MAKES A PROMISE

Willoughby stood by the fireplace, fingering a china dog with a blasé expression that stood on the mantel. It wore a cynical smile about its flat, painted lips. Yvonne sat at the center-table, her elbows resting on the olive-green felt cover. She looked up at Willoughby.

"You have been so kind, so very kind to me," she said, pensively.

"I have not been kind. I should have been glad if I could have done more, much more."

Willoughby was restraining himself with difficulty. He had purposely put the center-table between himself and Yvonne.

"And now you are come to say good-bye, and it may be another long space of years before I see you again," said Yvonne, with a quiver of the lip.

Willoughby looked away from her to the china dog, which leered at him unpleasantly. All the protective instinct in him was stirred

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

by Yvonne's homesick sadness. If he had found her a successful actress, encompassed by the graces of life, he would have had less temptation. But, in the sordid parlor, alone, unbefriended, Yvonne, with the quivering lip and the wistful gaze! It was more than his human nature could resist.

Yvonne had dropped her head down between her arms. A flood of memories came to her of the time when Willoughby had first known her and before—yes, long before that, when she was little and had sat with Poléon at the foot of the great pine-tree. With her face hidden from him on the table, she was crying. And Willoughby stood above her. His hands hovered over her head.

"My little girl," he said.

His voice was a caress.

Perhaps Yvonne did not hear him. She looked up with a smile. The tears still stood in her eyes.

"I do not want you to go yet. You are leaving before my great day. You are leaving before the tenth."

"And what is to happen on the tenth?"

"The crown of all things, the flower of

WILLOUGHBY MAKES A PROMISE

life. It is my Great Day. You will wait till then, Pierce?"

Willoughby could not but smile back at her. She was so like a happy child, whose soul swells with a secret.

"You want me to stay very much, very much indeed?" He felt the ground give beneath his feet. He had been so sure of himself when he had turned off Tottenham Court Road, and now, where was he?

"Ah, yes, very much indeed. You will promise me?"

Willoughby was standing by the mantelpiece again, and the hand which toyed with the china dog trembled. The china dog's long, painted lips were insolently knowing when Willoughby answered:

"Yes, Yvonne. I will—promise."

Eliza Blodgett, entering at that moment, startled Willoughby. The china dog fell from his hand and crashed on the tiles of the narrow hearth.

"I a'most feel like as if I 'ad lost a blood-relation," said Eliza, brushing up the pieces after Willoughby had gone out. "The gentleman said 'ow 'e'd bring me h'another, but h'another couldn't fill the place of Splop. 'E was named h'after Splop, my sister's

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

bull-terrier; 'e was a fat and lazy critter, but 'ad that wise look about 'is eyes an' mouth as was remarkable."

Richard Oglethorpe, Tom Barry and Pierce Willoughby were dining together at the Club.

"To-morrow is Yvonne's Great Day," said Barry, smiling at Oglethorpe.

Willoughby started. In fact, his nerves had been very shaky, of late. He did not look like a man who was enjoying a well-earned vacation. His face was thinner than when he had come to London, and his eyes were no longer fearless.

"It's out in the evening papers by this time, so we were to tell you at dinner," said Barry to Willoughby.

Then Oglethorpe went on to explain that he had been writing a play for Miss Brusseau. It was the dramatization of an old Algonquin legend that had been preserved by the French habitants in remote districts of Lower Canada.

"They believe in a sort of witch who haunts their streams. They call her La Jongleuse, or the Lady of the Flag-Flowers. The heroine of the drama is a girl who plays the witch at times and finally, in this guise,

WILLOUGHBY MAKES A PROMISE

frightens away her peasant-lover. A French officer comes adventuring about, and she runs off with him. She is afterward visited by Nemesis in the shape of the real Jongleuse, who appears to her, and she falls dead.

"I do not know what the critics will say to the supernatural element I have worked in, but the scenic effect will be great. It's rather an emotional piece, but I think Miss Brusseau capital for that eerie will-o'-the-wispish sort of thing, don't you?"

"Perhaps. I hope so," Barry returned, doubtfully. "She will succeed there if it's in her to succeed at all. You see, Mr. Willoughby, this has been written expressly for her, and gives an opportunity for all that fine, delicate, sprightly sort of work in which she's at her best. Folk-songs, dances, and all that. You know, Oglethorpe, I really think the girl has great talent if she can only work it out. She has never once seemed fairly pulled off."

"This setting takes her back, then, to a familiar atmosphere, and you think she will find herself there?" queried Willoughby.

"Quite so," answered the actor. "I am immensely interested in the outcome. I'm

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

sorry she's not backed by a better company, and hasn't a more progressive management. But genius will overcome a great deal. I've done the best I could for her. And really, it's her final venture. Her whole career, you might say, is at stake."

Poor little Yvonne! So this was her Great Day! She herself could not have been more harassed by excitement than Willoughby was, over the coming crisis.

"It's been a fancy of hers to keep it out of the papers and from every one but those immediately concerned," Barry went on. "That's why it wasn't announced before."

"Isn't that rather too bad?" questioned Willoughby. "Doesn't the advertising go a great way?"

"I think it doesn't matter," replied Barry. "If it's a fiasco, the less said the better. If not, we will put some red-hot stuff, as you Americans say, into the papers, and make it go."

"What do you call the play?" asked Willoughby of Oglethorpe.

"The Lady of the Flag-Flowers. I rather think the French has a weirder sound, don't you—la Dame aux Glaïeuls? By the way, Barry, how did the last re-

WILLOUGHBY MAKES A PROMISE

hearsal come off? I was sorry I couldn't be there."

Barry hesitated.

"Like fireworks," he said. "Intermittently, splashes of light and then darkness. A rocket-streak and then a stick."

Willoughby was invited to join the Barrys and Oglethorpe in their box for the opening night.

"She has been keeping it a secret especially from you," said Barry. "You know something, I believe, of the original setting."

CHAPTER IV

YVONNE'S GREAT DAY

The hours dragged themselves along, the next day, till evening came.

Tom Barry, Mrs. Barry, a stately lady, an actress of the old school, and Willoughby, stopped with their four-wheeler at Eliza Blodgett's for Yvonne.

"It's h'all in your mind," said Eliza to Yvonne, as she put a cloak around her, "it's h'all in your mind, w'ether you wins the game or not. It's the plucky 'eart that comes in the winning mare, as Currant, 'e says."

"Think what it means, Eliza dear," Yvonne's soft voice was thick with excitement, "if the people like me to-night."

"It's money in your pocket, p'unds and shillin's, that's w'at it is."

"It's more than that. It's my soul in heaven," Yvonne answered, huskily.

The four people drove along in silence for some time. Yvonne was first to break the silence.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"My friends," she said, "they all come back to me to-night, those twilight places; the pointed firs, the white mist creeping over the water, the white-moss swamp where I used to dread her—La Jongleuse."

She shivered slightly. They wondered at her mood, whether it were part of her acting or not. As the carriage rattled across the brilliance of Oxford Street and down the narrow darkness of Drury Lane, she put her hand over into Mrs. Barry's.

"I feel afraid," she said. "I can see Her now. She has such cold eyes. Her hair is so long. She steps so softly in the darkness!"

Willoughby, far withdrawn into himself, heard her words as if they came from an unknown country. He was trembling, too. Vague memories and regrets and the Shadow of Remorse, clustered round him.

They stepped out into the glare of light before The Druid.

Willoughby was at the keenest pitch of excitement. He could hardly wait for the curtain to roll up. When it did, it disclosed an English scene-painter's notion of Canada. It was rather German than otherwise, with a rushing stream in the background and pine-

YVONNE'S GREAT DAY

clad hills against the sky—very blue and curly as to stream, and very green and peaky as to hills. A Swiss *châlet* at the right stood for a habitan's cottage. Tinkle of cow-bells is heard, and Anaide's father and mother appear, engaged in the conventional^{er} gesticulatory peasant couple's conversation.^{er} Well and good so far. There is a ripple of laughter from the lane toward the left. Anaide rushes in, still laughing. It is Yvonne. She wears the red knit bodice and the dark blue skirt of the Bois-des-Erables. Willoughby catches his breath and looks. Yes, it is the same. Her black hair hangs in two braids. In one hand she swings a queer, ruffled white hat. She still laughs. She tries to explain to her parents. She cannot for laughter.

Then the audience breaks into laughter and applause. Yvonne has scored her first hit. Willoughby was the only one in the house who had not laughed.

In comes Jean, the peasant lover. His red woolen cap is comically awry. His eyes are big with fright. The scene goes on. Anaide is here, there and everywhere. She is a sprite, an Undine. The audience are delighted.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

The old folks have gone in now. Anaide seizes clumsy Jean by the wrist and induces him to try a little sauterie.

Then she sings. It is the "Sautiez, mignonne, Cécilia," the little chanson that first charmed Barry in the Park.

"Ma mignonette, embrassez-moi.
Nenni, Monsieur, je n'oserais——"

Yvonne's voice lilted upward like a meadow-lark's. The freshness of it, the naïvetè, her fawn-like timidity, were like a glimpse of the Golden Age to the world-weary men and women who saw her. For once, Yvonne had found herself in her art.

"Nenni, Monsieur, je n'oserais,
Car si papan le savait,
Sautiez, mignonne, Cécilia—
Ah, ah, Cécilia."

The quality of youth in her voice was irresistible. The pathos of her innocence misted the eyes of many a hardened theater-goer.

"Les oiseaux des bois, parlent-ils?
Ils parl'nt français, latin aussi."

What a dear, trustful child it is!

YVONNE'S GREAT DAY

“Ils parl'nt français, latin aussi.
Helas! que le monde est malin.
D'apprendre aux oiseaux le latin.”

Even Willoughby forgot for the moment the botched-up setting. Hill and stream were bathed in reality. It seemed the morning mists were on them. The Normandy song, with its quaint patois, the vivid grace of the little peasant girl, were a revelation to the spectators. The curtain went down on an enraptured audience.

Barry and Oglethorpe were shaking hands with each other and exchanging congratulations.

“She's a shower of sparks to-night,” exclaimed Barry, beaming on Oglethorpe. “In perfect form! No one could have taken it better.”

“I didn't know myself I'd done so good a piece of work,” exclaimed Oglethorpe, beaming on Barry.

“You humbug!” Barry returned, genially.

The party were finding their way to the green-room to applaud the little actress in person.

“There is only one thing to make it complete,” whispered Yvonne to Willoughby.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"I wish my cousin Poléon could see me to-night."

Willoughby, as he went out, thought he recognized a familiar face by the door, a man to whom the attendants were denying admittance. He seemed to be somewhat the worse for liquor, and was laboring under great excitement. When he took his seat in the box again Pierce recalled the face as that of Brockton Van Eyck.

The play went on. Anaide is the lady now, the darling of a French chevalier. She has been taken to France, and little dreaming that she is mistress and not wife, delights her lover in the seclusion of a hidden bower. The chateau-hall on the stage was harmoniously set out. Flaring logs in the deep fireplace touch with red the carved figures on the high-backed oaken settle, and gleam on the crossed swords above the prie-dieu chair. Candle-flames, like white tapering flowers, in their brazen sconces, fleck the darkness of tapestried walls. A great golden harp is dimly lustrous against one corner. The polished floor reflects the various lights like black ice on a starry evening. Now the master of the house enters, debonair and courtly, his glossy curls falling

YVONNE'S GREAT DAY

over the careless grace of a crimson mantle. He seats himself in his high, carven chair. His greyhound is at his feet, slender head between outstretched paws and watchful eyes on the crackling logs. The Count lays his plumed hat on the ebony table, beside the silver loving-cup with convolute handles. His white hands on his velvet lap are delicate as cameos. He looks toward the stairway, waiting for the lady Anaide. Her voice floats ahead of her in a fairy gossamer of song:

“Quand j’etais chez mon père,
Gai, vive le roi.”

Slowly she comes down the sweeping curve of the chateau-stair. Like one to the manorborn she walks. The trail of her skirts is epic. The poise of her head is poetry. Her bare, slender shoulders curve like a lily out of the leafy greenness of her shining gown.

“Superb!” murmured Oglethorpe. “One would think there were centuries behind her.”

“Wait till La Jongleuse appears,” Barry whispered, forgetting his doubts of the day before. “That will be a creation.”

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Willoughby was not in the box, nor was he on earth. Somewhere in space he floated on a new planet.

“Quand j'étais chez mon père,
Gai, vive le roi,”

sings Anaide, descending.

The Count has sprung forward to greet her, when he is stopped by a sudden commotion at the outer door. It is thrown open by a messenger, booted and spurred.

“Madame the Countess,” he announces.

Tall, imperious, the forgotten wife enters. Her blue eyes glance keenly about the hall, from her husband in his transfixed attitude, to the flower-like figure beside the baluster.

Yvonne pauses one perfect moment on the last tread of the stately stair, the song hushed on her lips, a gazelle's question in her black eyes. No one has yet spoken a word. It is so still in the house one might hear a ribbon fall, when a man's voice from the twilight of the pit cries out:

“Mon Dieu, c'est ma petite Yvonne.”

The sharp report of a pistol follows. Yvonne flings out one arm and has fallen on the polished floor. The candle, from its

YVONNE'S GREAT DAY

sconce, falls too, struck by her out-flung hand. The green shimmer of her twisted skirts is like April sunshine on the black floor.

It was all so quick and so silent that people hardly knew what it meant till they saw the curtain drop. Then they realized that an accident had happened.

CHAPTER V

HELEN'S LETTER

"Did I dream that I heard my cousin's voice?"

The question seemed to cost her an effort.

"Poor Poléon! My brave cousin! If he had come these many, many miles to look for me! But I was going to him, was I not? Did I not tell you, Eliza, that if my Great Day was good to me, then, after a while, I could go to Poléon? For it takes much money to go so far, so very far, and one must carry remembrances back to one's family."

Yvonne looked pitifully child-like as she lay there on the pillow.

"Dear Yvonne," said Pierce, "you will be strong again and may return to Vallette, if you wish it. We will take you there."

"I was doing well, was I not? I knew I was doing well. I was happy. My Great Day had come, but I had not yet shown them all I could do. And then, and then—this. Why should one have wished to hurt me?"

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"He was, I think, not in his right mind," Willoughby answered, slowly. "He did not, himself, know what he did."

He mercifully kept from her the name of the man who had been arrested.

"If I were a saint this would be called a trial, would it not?" said Yvonne. "When I was little, at the Convent, Sister Angeline taught me about the trials of the blessed saints. They were so very difficult to understand. You do not know, Pierce, do you, how difficult it is to understand? Last night I was just beginning to understand, and now—it is all dark again."

"It's trying to the h'eyes to 'av much light when you lays in bed that way," said Eliza. "I kep' it shaded in here a-purpose."

Richard Oglethorpe came in that morning to inquire after Yvonne. He brought Willoughby's mail from the Club. The top letter on the pile, as Willoughby laid them on the table, was Helen's. Yvonne's face brightened.

"It is from Helen, Pierce. I know her writing."

Willoughby's heart smote him, but he made no answer.

"And Helen writes to you, and has not

HELEN'S LETTER

answered my letter at all. Read it, Pierce. Perhaps she sends some message to me."

"Not now, Yvonne."

"Yes, yes, now," insisted she, with the privileged petulance of the sick.

Then she noticed Willoughby's face.

"There is something you are keeping from me," she exclaimed, weakly, but with that dramatic intonation so natural to her, "something I ought to know."

Willoughby opened his letter and read it. He read it again. He scarcely grasped its meaning. Released! Helen released him! And he was to ask no reason. But the message did not lift the weight from his heart.

"She, too, then, has found the pledge burdensome—she, too!"

He had taken those words of hers at their face-value. They were no better to him than ink, but she had written them in blood.

"Let me see it."

Yvonne's voice aroused him from his stupor. She had been watching him intently.

"I will let it tell its own story," he thought. "She would have to know in the end."

Without a word he handed her the letter.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

She read it and laid it on the bed beside her.

"In answer to something from you?"

The note of inquisition in her voice was accompanied by a curious effect of great self-restraint.

"To—nothing from me," answered Willoughby.

"Since——?" The self-restraint was greater.

"Since—I saw you."

There was tense silence.

"But it seems," said Willoughby, confusedly, "that Helen also had misunderstood her heart."

"Helen had misunderstood!"

The thin walls of self-restraint crumbled away. Yvonne's scornful voice pierced them through.

"Have you not read her letter? Blind, blind! And you have thrown away that love—for me."

She turned her face away from him and closed her eyes.

"You want me to go," said Willoughby, brokenly. "You will never wish to see me again."

Yvonne did not stir or speak.

HELEN'S LETTER

"There's two queer ones h'outside h'inquiring for Miss Yvonne," said Eliza Blodgett, tiptoeing in and speaking to Willoughby in a sick-room whisper.

"Did they give their names?"

"They spoke some sort of gibberidge w'ich I couldn' make out. Perhaps they're not right i' the 'ead, for they couldn't h'understand my h'English, neither. One of them has a sort o' pumpkin skin an' h'eyes that looks clean through you. T'other one is a priest, I take it, with the black skirts to 'is coat and the cross 'e wears on 'im. I stood 'em in the 'all, till I should h'ask you."

Willoughby went out and saw in the hall Poléon Gros-Louys and the Abbé St. Clair.

CHAPTER VI

THE DERELICT

When the derelict, the prey of wind and wave for many a year, floats up against the noble ship that has just foundered on a rock, what will they say to each other?

Pierce Willoughby sat with Brockton Van Eyck in his prison cell.

Willoughby had read that afternoon before the Gracchian Club a paper called "The Reformer and the Outcast." It had been promised months before. He had made a powerful appeal to society to gather in the outcasts by making them feel that the world was fellow-sharer with them of their guilt and suffering.

When he first met Van Eyck his hand-grasp had been hearty, but he could not keep the alien look out of his eyes. He saw two men sitting side by side. One was the Van Eyck of years ago, of the Fentons' dinner-table, the finished product of American idlesse, with his languid satire, his English slang, clever by imitation, a gentleman

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

by inheritance. There is a pink flush under the coolly-staring eyes and a nerveless droop at the corners of the clean-shaven lips. But so carefully groomed is he from head to foot that such slight traces of excess lend almost an air of patrician lassitude to his handsome features.

And here sits the other, with that dreadful look on his face of a man who has done with life and dares look neither behind nor before.

The respectful clothes of years ago, guiltless of wrinkle and bulge, are replaced by the indulgent clothes that lashly yield to the relaxed outlines of the body, hooping over the sunken chest and creasing around the flaccid waist.

Swollen eyelids droop over wandering eyes and a dark mustache shades the flabby lips.

Willoughby had wished to come as a friend and helper, but he underwent a physical and moral revulsion in the presence of such degeneracy. That Yvonne should suffer at the hands of him seemed intolerable.

What he had planned to say, wise words of cheer and counsel, slipped from him. When one's will is at war with one's feelings

THE DERELICT

the result is often a vacuum. Therefore he sat silent, seemingly on the point of speech, with a curiously pained look in his blue eyes and his mouth sterner than usual.

His silence stung Brockton to reckless utterance.

"I don't care a rap what they do with me." He flung one leg over the other and thrust his hands into his trousers' pockets. "It's a bad world; better out of it than in."

"For the world!" Willoughby thought, and instantly scorned himself for the alien coldness which he could not conquer.

"It was myself I meant to send out—no one else—not her. Oh, not her."

Brockton's voice quivered, and he dropped the bravado. "How is she?"

Willoughby held back for a moment from an answer.

The blurred eyes steadied themselves on him. "She is not——"

"No, no," Willoughby answered, wildly. "She lives. She may recover."

"You have talked with her? What does she say? Does she know——?"

"She knows nothing, of you," answered Willoughby, loathly.

"Thank heaven!"

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

The tears coursed down his cheeks. "I—I—loved her, Willoughby. She could have made anything of me."

He drew himself up with a phantasmagoric show of manliness.

"I would not have hurt a hair of her head. I would have stood up for her against the world, by God, I would."

The maudlin tears fell again.

"I can't tell what I do at times. I'm a staring idiot or the whole world's a staring idiot."

He leaned forward and whispered hoarsely into Willoughby's face.

"I hardly knew what happened that night. I took my pistol out, I thought I did. I don't know what I did with it. The sight of her drove me wild. Then I heard the shot. I didn't know I had shot till they gathered round and cursed me. My eyes play the mischief with me. But I didn't care if they dragged me off. Curse you, you bloomin' fools."

"Why can I not say a word?" Willoughby thought. "Why am I speechless before such need?"

"Hypocrite," his conscience suddenly accused him. "You are stooping down as if

THE DERELICT

from a height, when you should stand face to face with this man. You, fallen too, like him."

Pierce roused himself to speak, hushing the voice that snarled at him within.

"Do not think of the past. Think of what you yet may be. God has given us that great gift, the future. We can build up again what has fallen down."

His voice rang hollowly in his own ears.

"D—— the future," exclaimed Brockton, with an oath. "It's what I'm always thinking about. It's hideous."

"God!" cried Willoughby. He dropped on his knees beside the window; his forehead touched the bars.

The keeper who sat outside the door watched him woodenly.

His own Future came before him then, a ghastly apparition. She stood with a sneer upon her lips, pointing at Helen, straight brows severely drawn over gray eyes of reproach; at Yvonne, with her face turned toward the wall. Behind his Future stood Public Reform, a noble figure of immaculate mien; on the other side crouched Private Dishonor. And the faces of both were his own.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Pray!" said Brockton. "You are a good man. Pray, quick."

He propped himself up upright on the pallet, his two arms rigid by his side, his clenched hands indenting the mattress, as he pressed his weight upon them.

"I cannot," said Willoughby, curtly. "I am guiltier than you."

He still knelt, having no thought but of his own degradation.

"You have not been false to a true woman. I have. You have not paraded before men. I have. You have not deceived yourself. I have."

Drily, without a trace of sentiment in his voice, he spoke. He was strangely unmoved. But he still knelt.

Then some one prayed, not Willoughby. Van Eyck, who had never prayed before, spoke to his Maker. He spoke of himself as if he had been another. He spoke to God as if God had been a man. He did not know that he spoke aloud.

"God, you gave him your terrible gift of too much. They were all his, once, and more,—all that a man craves and more. He took from your hands and was not satisfied.

"God, you starved him with satiety, you

THE DERELICT

impoverished him with abundance. In the blaze of the sun the soul wilted. With the never-ceasing showers the roots rotted away. There is no longer room for him in the garden. Pull up the exhausted plant and toss it away. God, I beseech you, forget him utterly!"

The deep silence that falls between two persons fell between these two. It was deeper than the silence of solitude. The Devil listened, not understanding the prayer. For it was his prayer, "God, forget him utterly."

And one of the prayers ascended to heaven.

Van Eyck, sitting upright on his bed, with unbuttoned vest and damp hair matted on his forehead, drew a long sigh. "To be forgotten!" That was the goal of his desires. What a pitiful period to the manuscript of life! That all one's strivings should come just to this! To be blotted off the slate!

The darkness settled round him in the cell. The street sent up an inarticulate murmur.

Willoughby's head, as he knelt in front of the window, caught the fading streaks of light from the iron-barred sky.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

The prayer went on. The man on the pallet listened now.

"Thou God, who makest the grass to fade, who pluckest up the strong tree by the roots that it perishes utterly, merciful God, who scatterest the seeds abroad, that the dead plants live an hundred-fold, pluck from this poor withered stem its seed of life and plant it in fruitful soil. Merciful Creator, water it with thy Goodness and cause thy sun to shine upon it, that it may grow again to be fair and strong.

"Son of God, we have sinned, we have sinned. Not for honor, not for hope, not for love, do we beg. Not for life we have lost. But that we may enter thy kingdom with Salvation writ on our foreheads. Lamb of God, that washest away the sins of the world, grant us thy Peace."

"Time's up," said the warden, knocking on the door.

Willoughby took Brockton's hand. His Saxon instinct made him commonplace again.

"Thank you," he said.

But he had no response. The man's fingers were limp in his grasp. Willoughby looked closer and a vacant stare met his

THE DERELICT

gaze, an unseeing stare from the bloodshot light-brown eyes.

"Something will come to her on the tenth," Van Eyck was muttering. "She will be happy at last—at last."



CHAPTER VII

THE CALLING

There is no place in the world so quivering with high-strung intensity as a great railway station. The air is palpitant with a thousand decisions and undecisions. Not the lobby of the House before the reading of a capitalist's bill, not a down-town hotel on the eve of a general election, not a newspaper office before going to press, not even the corridor of a woman's college at commencement time, can show a tithe of the taut and screaming electricity that tingles through one's blood in a railway station just before an overland train pulls out on its momentous journey.

Three men had passed under the grim castellated entrance of Euston, and were waiting for the Midland Express. Only one of the three was unmoved by the babel around them, and he was the one who had never before seen its like. The crimson-painted engine slid round the curve and stood waiting before the platform. An

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

army of porters and passengers ran hither and thither. Boxes and portmanteaus were piled in inextricable confusion. People ran helplessly back and forth from coach to coach. The bell began to toll dreadfully. The glaring engine puffed slowly forward. The last belated traveler was forbidden right of way by a Rhadamanthine officer. Puff, screech, groan; thud, thud, thud, the Midland Express was fairly off, watched by admiring eyes of station loungers and employés. Calm reigned out of chaos, a calm that by contrast seemed a negation of life.

The Abbé St. Clair read absorbedly by the coach window. Poléon and Willoughby, opposite, talked.

A common love and a common sorrow had brought these two natures together. Dissimilar almost as if born on different planets, they had each understood the other from the moment of the colloquy in Eliza Blodgett's hall. No jealousy, no rivalry, marred the perfect understanding. For two enemies may clasp hands on the battle-field at evening.

They talked, but they did not converse. An Indian does not converse. Something

THE CALLING

in his unwonted surroundings, in the foreboding sense of calamity, perhaps the detachment from life one experiences in the onward oblivious rush of a railway train, broke down Poléon's reserve. He lost himself in monologues. At rare intervals, when Willoughby spoke, he listened without seeming to listen.

"In the great northern country one is alone for days. There is no sound but the far howl of a wolf and the creaking of a frozen bough in the bitter wind. Sometimes there is soft stepping around the door at night. But the camp-fire guards you. All is white, white. One is always alone. It is good to be alone. Men are not like fishes to go in sliddering shoals or like screaming terns to travel in black wedges or like cattle to huddle together in a shed. I have lived a hundred lives in a day in the great north country. I go swiftly on snowshoes over the deep, deep snow, and my soul walks beside me. One has to be silent many days, and the forest must be great, and then in the long, white hours your soul will walk beside you. You can hear her soft breathing like a sigh of wind in the topmost plumes of a tall pine when the underwoods

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

are still. She is like a clear, white shadow, and she says: 'Here am I. You are no more alone.'

"One must know the forest first, where the moose-beds are in the big swamps and where the winding streams, locked in ice; where the underbrush is like a solid wall, and where the open country sets in. Then, on a windless night one steps out, noiseless, and calls the moose. If the wind blows, ever so gently, one must be to the leeward of the wind, or the moose will smell you, a man. A moose is wise. He has a soul as large as a man's. He has knowledge. Sometimes he is enchanted, the old Indians say. They mean the soul of a man has gone into him. When a moose with his red eyes and his great antlers stands above a man and stamps the life out of him with his strong, iron hoofs, the life of the man goes into the moose. So they say, and then he is enchanted. I do not know whether this is so. I have known things more wonderful.

"It was a moonlight night up by the Mistassini River. The ground had been locked for weeks, and the snow was crusted over hard as glass. That day the south wind had blown and the snow on the trees in the open

THE CALLING

places had melted a little at noontime and fallen. St. Christophe! What a night it was to call the moose! One could walk on the snow like a feather on the sea. The snow dropped from the branches and one could move through the brush without fear. On a still night even a Huron will be betrayed by his noise. The south wind blew the smell of me back. The moose were hungry, and would be coming out to feed.

“I had my rifle ready and stood behind a tree. I called them. *Sacré*, how I called! One who has heard the moose call can never forget. One long note pulled out like pain, and after, breaking into a hundred stars that dance away alive through the forest. Then you gather them all in again like darting minnows in a net, all in your mouth until your body is full of breath, and then your soul goes out of your mouth again as white and round and shining as the moon. That is the moose-call. Even an enchanted moose could not have doubted that call. I heard them coming from the bogs. Far away the branches crackled, and the snow crashed once beneath the feet of a buck. They are careful as a cat, and will often step

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

as velvetly. So this was a good sign. I knew I had given the call of a Gros-Louys. I waited. They were coming toward me, two, it might be three, and I had my rifle ready.

"The moon looked down through the trees. The shadows on the snow were very black. Then something happened. I did not know what it was, but the moose suddenly stopped. They heard something which I did not hear, for a moose is wiser than a man.

"I listened, and I heard it, too. It was not like any moose-call I had ever heard, but the animals believed it. It was as if each one were rushing to his mate. There was a mighty crackling and crashing, and then I heard them, kak, ak, k; pung, ung, ng; clid, id, d. All the noise of them grew faint and fainter in answer to that strange, new call.

" 'O-dil-o-ro-han-nin.' It was the voice of my mate, too. My heart grew tight as I heard it, and I dropped my rifle.

" 'O-dil-o-ro-han-nin.' As faint as a star at sunrise, deep like the eyes of a wounded doe. Now near and now far, it sounded through the forest by the Mistassini River.

THE CALLING

Sometimes in the branch above my head and
sometimes from the moon.

"I answered the call. That is why I am
here."

The train was speeding through rural
England now, on its way to Scotland and
Yvonne. Little red thorpes, snug farms
amid their hedge-rows, rushed into and out
of view.

The long English twilight began to fall.

 "—gray twilight poured
 On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
 A haunt of ancient Peace."

CHAPTER VIII

AT CHATEAUHERIAULT

In the lowlands of Scōtland where the noble estates of Scotch baronets and English peers sweep mile on mile with becoming British gravity, stately forest, billowy meadow and dappled lawn, crowned by dignified mansions, massive gray of stone, softened here and there with green of ivy, amid all this serious, substantial beauty,^a lies the rococo anachronism of Chateauheriault.

Centuries ago a nobleman of France had married a daughter of Scotland, and had held broad acres in both countries. When, in the course of years, his French property was wrested from him this Scottish homestead was refashioned into the exact likeness of the French chateau, once his. It was in the early sixteen hundreds, when Renaissance architecture and Italian gardening were in vogue. The remodeled mansion bore his family name and was ever afterward known as Chateauheriault.

From the laughing pink and white stone

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

face of the turreted, towered and balconied mansion the land slopes down in six terraces till it can slope no longer, and falls off into the fir-shaded ravine where the bracken and bluebells hang in the spray-misted twilight, and, in the bottom darkness, the Maryburn, glinted with amber, purls along to the Clyde. The Count would stand on the stone steps of the sixth terrace, so the stories run, leaning over the balustrade, and look down on the shadowed glen so unmitigably Scotch, where the artificial lake and the swans should have been, and say with a smile and a shrug how it reminded him of his nearest neighbor, a Scotch laird, some miles away, whose conversation would begin most classically French, and end with the broadest Scotch.

He must have been a fanciful old lord, this Count D'Héry, for the six terraces were each named for one of his six daughters, Isabeau, Marie, Alixe, Heloise, Lilys and Reine, and one can still trace, in the worked iron of the benches, that are set into the green banks, the twisted initial of each name, ending with the elaborate R, in the flourishy iron seat on Reine's Terrace. So,

at least, the story goes, and has been handed down from family to family and from retainer to retainer. Old Sandy, the present gardener, will also point to a thicket of shrubs and trees that cuts off Isabeau's Terrace from the rose-garden and is commonly known as "The Six." He will explain to you, with many twinklings of the eye and strokings of the stubbly chin, how these are the Six Daughters, planted originally by the old lord and renewed ever since by nature or art. Ilex for Isabeau; myrtle for Marie; acacia for Alixe; hawthorn for Heloise; laurel for Lilys, and the rose-tree for Reine.

"They are varry bonny lasses, ye ken," old Sandy says, and, indeed, nothing could be more charming than the mass of roseate loveliness when the Six are in bloom.

All along the stone wall that bounds the terraces on one hand, climbing trees have been set, quaintly flattened out in espaliers against its sunny face, and between them the lawless roses from the rosary beyond run riot. Old-fashioned roses all, with old names that seem to carry something of scent and glow in their syllables; the climbing Provence roses, a very abandon of

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

plump pinkness and profusion; the yellow eglantine; the Ayrshire rose, climbing too, but pale and scarce-petaled beside its southern sister; the York and Lancaster, red and white harlequin of the garden; the little Burnet roses, white, pink, and yellow; and sweetest of all, the cinnamon and moss-roses, with their darling buds and odor of the spice-box.

At the other end the terraces are guarded by a hedge of shrubbery, tree-of-heaven, large-leaved and pale-flowered; althea, with its great, vivid, pink blooms; the Italian may and laburnum, showering gold. Here and there gateways are spaced between taller trees planted apart and trained to interlace, slim, glossy-leaved oleanders and mulberries, dropping their purple single berries.

The Barrys had taken Chateaufort for the season, and here, when Yvonne's illness proved obstinately lingering, she herself was brought.

"Scotland is not a pretty place, but the h'air is maybe fine," said Eliza, bidding her good-bye. "They be great for porridge, w'ich is not so bad, but my sister as was there telled me of summat they call haggis. It's nasty stuff, and I doubt you could stand

AT CHATEAUHERIAULT

it. Your stummick's too h'English for such furrin messes."

Yvonne was very happy at Chateauheriault, happier than she had been in many years. She would lie on Isabeau's Terrace in the sun, propped up by pillows and cushions, and watch the finger on the sundial follow the slow hours round, while Tom Barry read to her melodious passages from English poets. One thing alone troubled her, the separation between Helen and Willoughby. A cable message had been sent to bring Helen over, and Yvonne cherished a solemn hope that the meeting would result in their reunion, "and perhaps before I die."

The last three words she had spoken aloud.

"Dear child," said Barry, "that will be a long time. What are you going to do before you die?"

"I do not know how long a time," replied Yvonne. "The days go very gently here. Even one day is long. See how slowly the shadow moves on the dial's face."

"Do the days seem so long, Yvonne?" asked Barry, with sudden compassion.

"It is peaceful to have them long,"

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

Yvonne answered, "for I am tired, just a little tired, but I like to lie here and rest. I am waiting for my friend Helen. That is the only reason I should want the slow hours to hurry."

When Helen came to Chateaubert, the last shadow left Yvonne's face.

"Why do you cry?" she asked, laying her hand on Helen's head, beside her on the pillow.

After a while, Helen was calmer.

"I understand," whispered Yvonne, "it is not for me. But one who loves does not need to cry. Love will bring fulfillment."

As Helen was silent, Yvonne asked, timidly: "You still love him, Helen?"

"Yes," came from Helen in a voice of rich self-surrender.

"Friend of mine!" Yvonne's eyes were fervid with prescience.

How much Willoughby had suffered in the past weeks Helen realized when she saw him. The grayer hair, the thinner face, the deeper lines, the haggard eyes—she could have wept for pity. They clasped hands gravely, Pierce with bowed head and chastened look, Helen very pale, delicate lips severely set to control her emotion.

AT CHATEAUHERIAULT

Yvonne watched them from her window as they paced up and down together, in grave converse, on Isabeau's Terrace.

That evening, when all three were again together, Yvonne looked from one to the other.

"Pierce, Helen has forgiven you," she said.

As Willoughby's eyes rested on Helen they overflowed with the great repentance that had followed the remorse.

"Yvonne," said Helen, breaking the silence which followed, "he and I both know that it can never be."

"For I am not worthy of her," Willoughby added.

Yvonne put her hand to her side. "Mon Dieu," she exclaimed, "how it hurts me!"

When the pain had passed she opened her eyes and smiled.

"Pardon me, it is gone now," she said, adding in a different voice, "I am glad you are together again with me. It is no matter what you say. You do not understand, for you cannot read the future."

She was smiling as if for some deep, inward joy, nor did she again seem troubled over anything. During the time that followed a blither little spirit than hers had

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

never been known. In her room, looking out over the quaint flower-inlaid lawns, or in her reclining-chair by the old sun-dial on Isabeau's Terrace, she was like the soul of spring, spring that passes, gladdening the earth that it leaves.

Sandy had brought her in some of the hardy little flowers that made the many-colored borders around the chateau. There was purple of Canterbury bells, the yellow and violet of zinnias, the hoary blue of mourning-bride, the fragrant orange wall-flowers, the pheasant's eye pink, with its raggedy velvet petals, all in a gorgeous bunch of variegated color, texture and form.

Barry read to her from the Shepherds Calender:

“Bring hether the Pincke and purple
Cullumbine,
With Gelliflowres,
Bring Coronations and Sops in wine,
Worne of Paramoures:
Strowe me the ground with daffadowndillies,
And Cowslips and Kingcups and loved
Lillies:
The pretie Pawnce,
And the Chevisaunce
Shall match with the fayre flowre Delice.”

"How pretty!" cried Yvonne. "Those are the flowers we have at Jeune Vallette. 'The pretie Pawnce' with us is all purple and yellow and little, like what you call heart's-ease, and the 'fayre flowre Delice,' that grows wild in the meadows along the river-edges."

They were all quiet. The fragrance of the wall-flowers stole subtly into the air.

"I am only waiting now till my cousin comes," said Yvonne, "and the dear Abbé."

That had been a curious expression of hers which Barry had noticed before. She was "only waiting."

On the day that Poléon was expected Yvonne was so much stronger that they moved her out upon the terrace for the warm afternoon sun. She lay with her back to the sunny south wall, where the quince-tree grew and the Provence roses boldly clambered over. Down at the end of a green vista twin oleanders were trained to intertwine.

"I somehow feel," said Yvonne to Helen, "as if I had lived here before. Strange, is it not?"

Then Poléon and the priest, who had

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

arrived a few minutes before, came between the arch of the trees, stepping softly upon the close-shorn grass.

The kindly, inscrutable eyes of the Abbé looked into her own, and only he saw the joy that was in them. The long sunny afternoon went by. Slowly the shadow moved on the sun-dial's impassive face. The sound of Sandy's hoe was heard, weeding the parterres below them on Alixe's Terrace. Poléon, Yvonne and the Abbé were a little group by themselves.

"Je suis contente, contente," Yvonne murmured. "I hear them talking now, the pine-trees of my home."

When the sun sank lower they were all gathered round her. The scythes of the mowers in a distant meadow beat a swishing measure, sleepily. The pink sunlight, slanted over the fir-trees of the glen, touched Yvonne's forehead.

"Yes, Poléon," they heard her say, "if you wish it, I also am content."

Then that little group were witness to the solemn ceremony of the Roman Catholic Church which made Poléon Gros-Louys and Yvonne man and wife.

"We were promise of each other ven we

AT CHATEAUHERIAULT

were ver' small," she said, softly, relapsing into the broken English of her childhood. "Il-y a longtemps—dans le temps jadis. He vass of my peoples. I haf made him much misère. He gifs me ze pardon. I ask ze grande pardon of all."

Then she took Pierce's hand and laid it upon Helen's as they sat beside her.

"Voila!" she said, "c'est bon comme ça. N'est pas, mes amis?"

The sun sank lower yet. The shadow on the dial crept round. The odor of the cinnamon roses floated over the wall.

"Ah, mon Dieu!" Yvonne spoke, almost inaudibly. "It makes so dark. Hold me, Poléon. I can no more see."

With her hand in her cousin's, she was happy again. Only once after that did she fear. The long Scotch sunset purpled the old terraced garden. The Maryburn gurgled deep down in its glen.

"La Dame aux Glaïeuls!" Yvonne cried. "I haf fear. She come all sof'ly——"

The priest stepped in between Yvonne and Poléon.

"Fear not, my child!" he said, "look to the Savior and the Lord of your soul."

He held the crucifix up before her eyes.

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

"Sweetest Lord Jesus," she murmured.

The sun-dial was all in shadow now.

"Yvonne!" cried Poléon, in a great voice of grief, "Dew-of-the-Morning! My wife!"

CHAPTER IX

AFTER THE TENTH

"Suffering from mental aberration. Of unbalanced mind," had been the finding of the court upon the case.

Strong influence had been brought to bear that the verdict might not be severe. It was only at rare intervals now that he was sane and clear. His memory had utterly gone. He had forgotten the night of The Lady of the Flag-Flowers. He did not even know for what he had been imprisoned. He talked little. He seemed to see strange sights and hear strange sounds. He would sometimes look up with a startled air or seem listening for a far-away voice.

"Is it after the tenth?" he kept asking his custodians. "She promised to tell me her secret after the tenth."

They decided to take him to Chateauheri-ault.

The coverlet under which Yvonne lay was strewn with flowers, not pale blossoms, heavy-scented, but the gay, homely blooms

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

of old gardens. Scattered all above her they were, purple of Cullumbines and pink of Coronations; Gilliflowres, cinnamon roses and the "fayre flowre Delice." She looked like a child fallen asleep in summer's lap. Her dark hair was loose about her face, as she had worn it long ago at Jeune Vallette. The little features, in their repose, bore the sealed look that marks the Indian. The shadow of a smile lingered about the still mouth.

"Do not waken her. She is asleep," they said to Brockton.

"She smiles," he spoke very gently. "She has her secret all to herself, and the great God understands."

EPILOGUE



HEART'S-EASE

"To nothing dreadful, but to the place from whence
thou camest, to things friendly and akin to thee."

—*Epictetus.*

EPILOGUE



HEART'S-EASE

The St. Gabriel dashes, broad-spread in woolly-white foam, over the rocks of the rapids, tosses into an intricate wonder of spray and gathers itself together for the long, desperate, downward plunge through the narrows of the fir-darkened gorge. All this turbulence is spanned by the expressionless bridge, and the old mill looks down on the frenzied river, in quiet wonder. On the outskirts of the woods beyond the bridge the firs are taciturn. Young birches are near them, the wind rippling over their watery-twinkling leaves. They whisper among themselves like mystery-hugging children. Up and down the high-road goes the slow, intermittent stream of human life. The habitan jogs by in his two-wheeled cart to Ancienne Vallette. Two little bare-legged Huron boys swinging their pails of blueberries, come from the Chateaubourg mountain. A woman with a basket of flowers drifts wearily along. Her large, flat hat is

EPILOGUE

tied down under her chin with faded ribbon. There are rings in her ears, and her blue eyes in her brown, wrinkled face have an uncanny paleness. She sells flowers to the sight-seers that drive out from Quebec, wild-flowers from the field and garden geraniums and pansies, tied together in incongruous nosegays. The habitants call her *La Dame aux Fleurs*. Now a two-wheeled cart comes slowly along, and turns into the high-road from the *Chemin de Misère*. A farmer and his two little girls sit together, and on their laps rests a small white coffin. Except white streamers that float from their bonnets, they are scrupulously in black from head to foot. From Misery Road comes the cart with its sad little burden. The same cart that carries the beets and the squashes to the Lower Town Market carries some little Lucette to her last resting-place in the parish graveyard beside her mother. The stocky white horse droops his head as if in sympathy with the grief of its master. All exposed to the public gaze, they go by, but wrapped in the inviolate seclusion of sorrow.

The little Huron children cease their chatter. The *Dame aux Fleurs* rests her

HEART'S-EASE

basket on the railing of the bridge and drops an ave. The weather-beaten guide, who has been mending his canoe on the steps of his house in the Huron village, leaves his work and goes into the somber chapel. Perhaps he, too, will pray for some remembered dead.

In the burying ground a man and a woman stand side by side. To both of them the place is fraught with an unforgettable past, to the man who has twice before been here, but long ago, and to his wife newly wed, who sees for the first time La Jeune Vallette.

They stand by a little stone sunk slantwise in the straggling grass and wild-flowers. On its moss-grown, unpolished face one may faintly decipher the unskillful letters, "En· memoire," and below one reads, "Yvonne, épouse beaucoup-aimée."

Many years the spring has blossomed and paled above the stone, and the wild-flowers brightened and drifted away, in winged seeds and wisps of down. In winter, the deep snow has set its seal on the ground, and only a frayed tuft of everlasting-flower above the snow's blue whiteness speaks of the life that is sleeping.

EPILOGUE

Along the length of the mound some careful hand has pulled away the yarrow and the daisies and planted it with purple and yellow heart's-ease. The round, small faces of the flowers look up like innocent, wondering children.

A blithe catch of song comes from a passer-by on the Chateaubourg road:

“Win I Nanette?

I think I may.

Win I Nanette?

Ah, nay; ah, nay.”

PRINTED BY R. R. DONNELLEY
AND SONS COMPANY AT THE
LAKESIDE PRESS, CHICAGO, ILL.



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

REC'D LIBRARY

MAR 1

rm L9-25m-8,'46(9852)444

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 920 171 6

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
THIS BOOK CARD



University Research Library

CALL NUMBER

SER VOL



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27
DEM L30202

THE LADY OF THE FLAG-FLOWERS

